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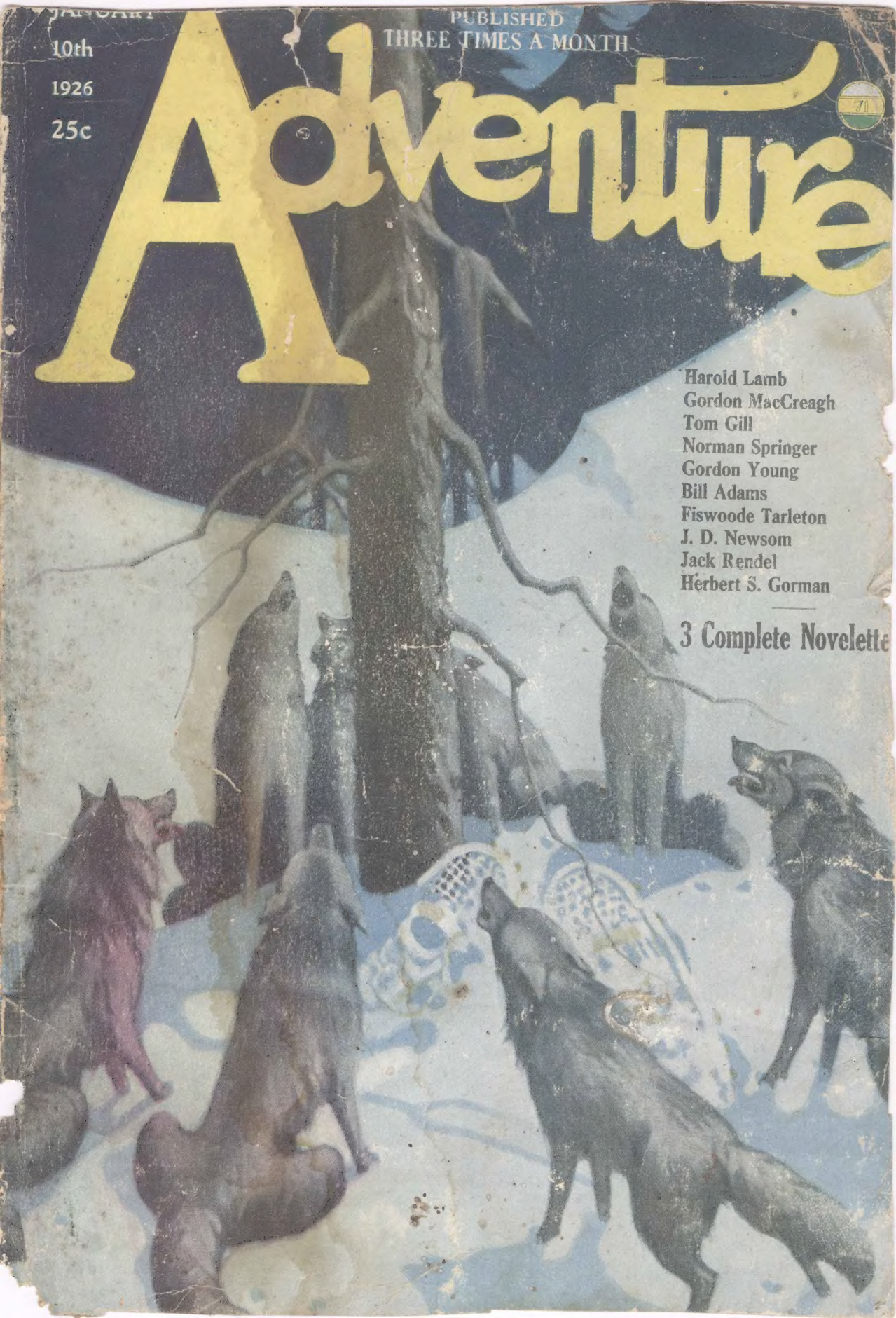
Harold Lamb
Gordon MacCreagh
Tom Gill
Norman Springer
Gordon Young
Bill Adams
Fiswoode Tarleton
J. D. Newsom
Jack Rendel
Herbert S. Gorman

3 Complete Novelette



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Adventure

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Headings . . . . . **Neil O'Keeffe**

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Three Complete Novelettes

ONE of the eleven men sentenced to be shot had mysteriously escaped in the night. Yet, when *Alfred Darley* counted the corpses piled in front of the church, there were—*eleven.* "DREGS OF DEFEAT," a complete novelette by Georges Surdez will appear in the next issue.

THE suave mulatto had always stayed inside the law; but this time there were finger prints. *Poggioli* wondered. "THE PRINTS OF HANTOUN" is a complete novelette, by T. S. Stribling, in the next issue.

JOHN GLENN was a king of the wilderness. He held a tribe of Indians in fear and profited richly by trading with them. When *Spike* invaded *Glenn's* realm, he gave the ruler of the forest several problems and a hope. "THE KING OF MATABANICK," a complete novelette by Leslie McFarlane, will appear in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

Adventure Volume LIV No. 4 January 10, 1926

The Spanish Tornado

by Norman Springer

A Complete Novelette

Author of "The Ghost of Dago Fiddler," "Freedom's Last Stand," etc.

DURING his after-breakfast stroll Charley Peace, *Mr.* Peace, if you please, directed his steps in the usual rambling course that brought him finally to Pedersen's sail loft in Drum Street. He had formed a habit of calling in on Pedersen during his morning parade of the waterfront; he liked to have a pipe and yarn with the old fellow. Also, whenever Pedersen had a rush job in the loft, Mr. Peace bore a hand with palm and needle and earned a couple of dollars. Very welcome were these stray dollars. Mr. Peace had been ashore for more than a month. His payday was nearly gone, and the times were hard.

Indeed, the times were very hard. Ships tied up instead of sailing. The hard-up boarding houses were filled chock-a-block with penniless seamen. Men rioted for a chance to ride blue water in any capacity, at any wage. Steady, tried officers who had sailed aft for years were shipping off-shore before the mast, and glad of the chance.

A young merchant officer ashore at such a time, without influence to push his case or a great deal of experience to recommend him to masters, might be pardoned unpleasant forebodings. It was a bad time to be on the beach. It was only a step from "Tops'l" Nealy's comfortable pay-as-you-go boarding house for mates only to Mother Mason's hard-up hostelry for whatever tatter-breeked mariners could coax from her populous beds and plates of burned burgoo on pledges of the next advance.

Mother Mason's was this morning well within hailing distance of Charley Peace.

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Mother Mason's was just as far from him as the bottom of his pocket, for Tops'l Nealy extended no credit these hard times. And Mother Mason's meant the end for the time being, both ashore and afloat, of the cherished "Mister." Mother Mason's meant jail fare ashore and forecastle fare in the next ship.

Not a pleasant outlook for a lad who was a bit of a dandy, who enjoyed clean beds and thick meals and who realized there was about as much chance of his getting an officer's berth in the near future as there was of Paddy Doyle being paid for his fabled boots. High time a wise lad banished soft and unrenumerative thoughts, however enticing, and gave sober and undistracted consideration to ways and means.

But then Mr. Peace laid no claim to wisdom. He had richer assets. Youth. A hard and healthy body. An upper lip that had never known a razor and hence possessed a small forest of silky hairs that already curled at the ends with assistance. A spotted calf-skin waistcoat which was the envy of sailortown. And lastly but chiefly, a heart that these days beat with a passion. With a grand passion.

Mr. Peace was twenty-two years old. It was the very first time his heart had ever felt a grand passion.

Then a fig for hard times. Charley Peace still had coins in his pocket. He could still buy the few beers which entitled him to his nightly seat in the Bella Union. Nothing else really mattered. The times, why, they were grand times! Never were such wonderful times. There was a good savor to the times if one's head were only high enough above the grimy cobblestones. Mr. Peace's head was high above the house tops. And up there in the wintry blue langorous and scented winds blew about his bemused head and the whole heavens sighed and whispered the magic words, "La Carmencita! La Carmencita!"

It was seven days since the heart began to thump beneath the spotted calf-skin waistcoat at sight, sound or thought of the magic name. One week to a day, or rather, night, since the Spanish Tornado had blown Mr. Peace clean out of this humdrum world into a new world of enchanted dreams and visions. Seven days since Mr. Peace discovered what a wonderful thing life was.

"La Carmencita! La Carmencita!"

It gave him a delightful ache just to speak the words to himself. Reverent murmuring. He never said them aloud. Nor whispered them or softer words, into the lady's ear. Indeed, he had never spoken to the lady, nor touched her hand, nor been closer to her than the width of a great, crowded room. He worshipped from a distance and did not hope or expect to come closer save in his dreams. Who was he to approach divinity? What could he say to her? In many ways Mr. Peace was even younger than his years.

Seven days ago. It was Saturday night. A Saturday night on the Barbary Coast of the port of San Francisco in the bitter month of February in the year of Grace 1877. All sailortown was cruising up and down the garish streets in search of dubious pleasures or even more dubious profits. Pacific Street and upper Kearney Street were filled from curb to curb with a boisterous, unsober, polyglot mob, over-ready of oath and fist and knife.

The tall, helmeted policemen walked their warlike beats two by two, twirling their long clubs between frays. From cellar dives and upstairs dens, from the unbroken rows of saloons and dance halls came the mingled voice of the coast in its prime, banging pianos and squawking accordions, thump of drums, bray of brass, clump of heavy, dancing feet, and over all the hoarse, feverish roar of voices. The Barbary Coast of the day when tall sailing ships still ruled the seas, and their horny-handed crews would have riotous and unholy holidays ashore. The Barbary Coast, lair of bawd and macqueman, spawning ground of every vice and villainy invented by man, famed of chantey and dog-watch yarn and police report. A festering slum, where sailormen dropped their paydays and their health.

Mr. Peace was doing the line. It was the thing to do on Saturday night if ashore in the port of San Francisco. He sought excitement, diversion, as did his fellows. But not romance. But not love. The elusive thrills, high thoughts and low voices, bright stars and brighter eyes, whispered pledges and furtive lips, and all the dear gear of that sweet business had no being in this place. Not even Mr. Peace was young enough to think it had. If romance ever lifted a head in these streets, it was to bargain. Love had its price. The painted trollops in the noisome alleys bawled it from door and window. No thoughts of a

passion, grand or otherwise, buzzed in Mr. Peace's head as he drifted with the mob down the line.

It was weariness of aimless walking that finally paused him before the blare of light that advertised the entrance to the Bella Union music, dance and drinking hall. The great swing doors were wide open. Through the thick, tobaccoed air of the interior he beheld a fat woman standing in the center of the raised stage at the farther end of the great room. In a shrill soprano she was wailing one of the lugubrious ballads of the day.

"O mother go and dig my grave,
And dig it lo-o-ong and narrow;
A young man di-i-ied for me last night,
I die for him tomorrow."

While he listened, Mr. Peace's eyes roved casually over the one sheet pasted up in the entrance. He read:

Riley and Ryan, Rollicking Rubes.
Mlle. Trixie, Songs of Sentiment.

"That will be that whale down there," reflected Mr. Peace.

Another poster caught his attention. A fetching daub in red and green, with a figure faintly suggestive of a Spanish dancer poised on the globe of earth with one foot, while the other foot, over her southwest shoulder, punctured the firmament.

"La Carmencita, the Spanish Tornado!" ran the legend. "She Kicks the Stars, Boys, She Kicks the Stars!"

"Now, that," said Mr. Peace to himself, "might be worth looking at."

He dodged past the bevy of courtesans inside the doors, and made his way to an empty chair well back against the wall. His order for beer placating the waiter, he leaned back and rested his feet and gave an idle attention to the stage. The Mlle. Trixie had departed with her "Songs of Sentiment" to "that long and narrow grave," hoped Mr. Peace. In the pit, a miniature orchestra was heralding the next act. Mr. Peace recognized the air and nodded with satisfaction. Just in time, he reflected, for that what's-her-name tornado.

For just so long did Charley Peace's indifference last. Then it vanished abruptly and completely. The dancer was stamping and swirling into view, her castanets clacking, her skirts standing out stiff from her knees. Mr. Peace sat up and took notice, he shivered hot, he shivered cold, his blue eyes widened with a great and delighted wonder.

So he sat and stared at the Spanish Tornado, at the madly whirling splurge of colors, at the shapely, leaping limbs, at the slender, swaying body, but most of all at the somber, white face with the glowing eyes, beneath a great crown of inky hair. That white face fascinated Mr. Peace. More than that, it finished him.

Just like that, it happened, without forethought or planning. A swirl of skirts, a flick of a white wrist, a spark leaping from the glowing eyes, an invisible spark that none the less contained the power of ignition. The Spanish Tornado. She was! A tornado of flame, a consuming blast! That spark that left her eyes; it touched off the tinder heaped beneath the calf-skin waistcoat.

It was a marvelous thing that happened to Mr. Peace in a brief moment. A white-faced, unsmiling girl kicked the stars in a Barbary Coast dive, and the showering star-dust refashioned the universe before Mr. Peace's dazzled eyes. On every side of him in that great room was the varied face of vice, the leer of lechery, of gluttony, of greed, of every evil lust that may disfigure the face of man. And lo, a veil of rosy light was drawn between him and the house through which he saw the dancer and naught else. The stenches of bad tobacco and stale liquor became as sweet perfumes in his nostrils; his ears were closed to all disturbing noises. It was as if he were all alone with her in some remote place and, to the accompaniment of celestial music, she was dancing a message to him and to him alone. Ah, great is the transfiguring power of a grand passion—if it is the first!

II

"HELLO, Sharley. Ay yust ban go to look for you. I hear of a yob," hailed old man Pedersen.

Mr. Peace glanced about the loft. The two journeymen were idling over a course. A stock job, he knew.

Pedersen shook his head.

"No, no, not a yob for me, vorse luck. A yob for you. Second mate in a nice bark. To Callao mit bridge timbers."

Mr. Peace's first feeling was of panic. To go away now! But immediately he experienced a wave of relief. Of course, it

wasn't so; old Pedersen was just having his little joke.

"Quit fooling a poor, starving sailor," he said.

"It ain'dt no yoke," insisted Pedersen.

Passion or no passion, Mr. Peace was becoming interested. A chance to get away to sea—aft! Incredible, but then—

"Bark, *Oloron*, Lamont, master," continued Pedersen. "You hear aboudt dat ship or captain, hey?"

"No, never did," said Mr. Peace. "But look here, Pedersen, I know my work well enough, but there are scads of older and better men than me ashore. What chance have I with only one voyage aft on my papers?"

"Da yob ban yours if you vant it," said Pedersen.

Something in the words or in the tone in which they were uttered caused Mr. Peace to look sharply at the old man.

"If I want it?" he echoed. "What's wrong with this ship? Is she a hell-ship?"

"No," said Pedersen. He puffed reflectively on his pipe for a moment. "More like you vould call her a deffel-ship—*ja*. Lamont, he ban 'Luck' Lamont."

"Is he so lucky?" asked Mr. Peace.

"He ain'dt lucky vun bit," answered Pedersen. "But he believe in luck like oder faller believe in Gott. Dat ban why you get da yob. I tell you aboudt it. Little while ago I meet Captain Lamont in Hansen's bar. He yust come ashore. I say 'Hello,' and he buy me a drink, for I haf done vork for him. He say 'Pedersen, I must ship a second mate.' I t'ink of you. I say, 'Captain, I know bright young faller for dat yob, name of Charley Peace.' 'Name of vat?' say he. 'Did you say name of Peace?' '*Ja*, Peace,' I say. 'Peace, Peace, love of Gott, dat ban goot name,' say he. 'Dot ban lucky name,' he say. 'Pedersen,' he say, 'I ship your young faller name of Peace. You tell him to be at my shipping commissioner's office at ten o'clock and I sign him on.' So, Sharley, da yob ban yours if you vant it."

Mr. Peace whistled, then laughed, then swore. These seemed the proper things to do under the circumstances; he couldn't think of anything appropriate to say. A berth, these days, on the mere mention of his name! Ridiculous!

"If you vant it," reiterated Pedersen. Anxiety was wrinkled into his red, open face and looked out of his pale, blue eyes. Pedersen liked Charley Peace. "I tell you, Sharley, I hear t'ings aboudt dat ship. Dat faller, he believe too much in luck, and dey ban an old nigger faller aboard I hear t'ings aboudt. Bad t'ings. It ban your yob, Sharley, but I not blame you if you say no."

"What? Turn it down?" cried Mr. Peace. "Why, Pedersen, I sort of believe in luck myself. Doesn't this prove it?"

Banished the soft follies of the week past, forgotten the scented zephyrs of high heaven, the magic name, the dreams and visions. Mr. Peace's head was down from the clouds and screwed firmly upon his broad shoulders. He was a stranded sailorman sniffing blue water. It might be a crazy way to get a job, on the strength of his name, but as good a way as the next, he decided, if the job were really forthcoming. But turn the chance down, as Pedersen hinted he should, because of some silly forecastle yarn or other—when it was the first chance he'd had since hitting the beach and likely the last chance he'd have for many a long day! Well, luck was a good thing to believe in, thought Mr. Peace. Within reason, of course. What was this but luck, good luck?

"I'll not say no," he told Pedersen. "Dashed glad to say yes, thank you."

III

"GOING second kicker o' the old barky, be you?" queried the chatty Whitehall boatman who was putting Mr. Peace and his gear aboard. "Well, if that ain't a go!"

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Peace, unencouragingly.

He was in no mood for gossip. He was leaving the beach, and he wanted to think about that, and about the last week, and about how far away he soon would be from the Bella Union and La Carmencita. He wanted to feel sad, and sorry for himself.

"Going aft in the *Oloron*," pursued the boatman. "Well, you got more nerve than most. Aft or for'ard, I wouldn't go in her. Gawstruth, no!"

Mr. Peace regarded the boatman with a chilly eye. It was no use; he couldn't think the way he wanted to think with this magpie chattering at him. And he was sick and tired of these remarks about his ship. He was signed on; she wasn't just any ship,

she was his ship. It was like listening to remarks about himself. Nothing straight out about them, either; just hints. First old Pedersen, then that bleary demijohn who signed him on, next Tops'l Nealy's lifted eyebrows and queer expression, now this old pickled herring whom he'd hired to put him aboard. It made him sick. Dash it all, they must think him an innocent babe going to a slaughter!

"Think she's too hot for me, do you?" he demanded somewhat truculently. "Well, I cut my teeth in hot ships."

The boatman cast his eye over Mr. Peace. The new second mate of the *Oloron* had the figure of a light heavyweight and the bearing of a champion; he looked to the boatman like a hard case for all his evident youth.

"I bet you did, too, Mister," agreed the boatman, admiringly. "Gawstruth, I wouldn't want to meet up with that fist o' yours, no I wouldn't. But it ain't fighting you'll get in the *Oloron*. Lamont gets his crews from the Knitting Swede, but no matter how tough they be, they don't cut up no didos in that ship." He snickered at the thought. "I should say they don't. There's that Jude."

Mr. Peace spat disgustedly over the gunwale. That Jude again. They all spoke of Jude. One would think Jude was the skipper and a holy terror to boot. And what was he? Just a nigger steward. Why, he was taking the captain's orders to Jude right now.

Mr. Peace began to think of those orders and then of the captain and then of his signing on. The thoughts didn't soothe his discontent. Signed on, aye, but what a way to come into a berth!

In truth, Mr. Peace's vanity was somewhat ruffled. Not a single question as to his competency, not a glance at his blooming physical fitness. Just his name. Just as Pedersen said. The Old Man wanted peace. A second mate's berth on the spelling of his name. Why, if he'd been a swivel-eyed runt of a steamship lubber instead of an upstanding seaman such as he was, he would have been signed on just the same!

His name was the one thing Captain Lamont had been interested in during the short interview in the shipping commissioner's office.

"Ah, Mister, your name is Peace?" had been Captain Lamont's eager question. "Peace, ah yes, Peace. I like that name, Mister. I think that is a lucky name. Ah, peace, yes. I'll need peace in my ship." All this in a half earnest, half jocular tone; then abruptly the jocularity vanished and Captain Lamont asked anxiously. "Peace, Mister? Ah, yes, and how is it spelled, Mister?"

"P-e-a-c-e," spelled the applicant.

Immense relief showed in the captain's eyes. "Ah, yes, that is good. I was afraid, Mister, you might spell it the other way. But it's all right. Peace, ah, yes. You might sign him on, Mr. Commissioner."

So Charley Peace signed on, quite certain that if his name had been spelled the other way he'd not be inking it on the papers.

What surprized Mr. Peace chiefly was the fact that his captain didn't look like a queer bird. Not a bit like "Shotgun" Crogan of the *Prudence Snow*, who hazed his crew to a fare-you-well six days a week and lay to and preached loving kindness all day Sunday; nor like Captain Elmer Purdy of the *Endeavor*, who affected a Byronic collar and a smooth face and who, 'twas said, wrote verses to the moon and recited them to the hands. Captain Lamont did not look eccentric at all. He didn't look much like a sailor, either, thought Mr. Peace, more like a southern planter with his garments of fine broadcloth, his mustaches and imperial and his lean, sallow face. He was, perhaps, still on the sunny side of forty, a tall man with a curious hesitancy in his voice and wistful, worried eyes. Sad, troubled eyes, seeing nothing to laugh at. They gave Mr. Peace a queer feeling. They seemed to be looking at things behind him.

"Ah, I hope, Mister, you can go aboard—ah—this afternoon," remarked the captain when the ceremony was concluded.

"Yes, sir, if you wish it," agreed Mr. Peace.

But he was disappointed; he had hoped for a farewell night at the Bella Union.

"We sail on the morning tide," said the captain. "Sunday morning, ah, a good day to begin a passage. Yes, the best day."

"Yes, sir, so it is," said Mr. Peace, seeing that he was expected to concur.

"Most propitious," added the other. "I have studied such things. A lucky day. Ah yes, and a lucky name—Peace."

He shook hands with the new second mate, nodded to the functionary behind the desk and started for the door. He spoke over his shoulder:

"Mister, you will please tell the mate that—ah, yes—I'll be off with the tugboat, and to be ready to pass the line. Ah—good day, suhs."

THE door closed behind him. The shipping master opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again as the door reopened and Captain Lamont's head intruded.

"Ah, Mister, I nearly forgot—ah, yes—forgot—" the voice was more drawling and hesitant than before, and the long face more worried. "If you would, Mister, ah—mind telling Jude—yes, Jude, that's my steward, Mister—mind telling Jude that I will be bringing my—ah, yes, bringing my lady—my lady, suh—aboard with me in the morning. To make the voyage, tell Jude. If you will be so good as to tell Jude, Mr. Peace. Ah, good day, suhs."

The door closed again, and this time the shipping master waited a moment. Then he laughed, leaning back in his chair and blowing an alcoholic gale up into Mr. Peace's face.

"You tell Jude, Mr. Peace," he cried. "Haw, haw, I was waiting for that, Mister. Old Jude, by ——, he'll need some luck and some peace!"

Mr. Peace backed away. He found the fellow's manner as offensive as his breath. He was signed on now; he didn't relish laughter directed at his captain.

"What's so funny?" he observed. "Can't a skipper bring his wife aboard his own ship without every pot-belly on the beach having a fit about it? Not," he added out of the wisdom of his years, "that I approve of women aboard ship."

The shipping master still wheezed and gurgled.

"No offense, Mister," he finally got out. "Your skipper's all right. So are you, Mister. Smart looking lad, if your name is Peace. Oh, my!" He laughed again, so violently he nearly choked upon his quid. "No offense," he insisted when he had caught his breath. "It's funny. You'll say so yourself when you've sized up the situation. You tell Jude. My ——, I'd like to be there when you give that message to the old nigger! Taking his lady to sea with him! Oh, lord, I nearly shouted in his face when he told me a while ago that he was getting married tonight. Tonight! And who d'ye think 'my lady' is, Mister? Who d'ye think?"

"I don't think," said Mr. Peace. "It's none of my business. Or yours either."

And he slammed the door behind him and strode into East Street. Dirty crimp's heeler, he thought angrily. He'd like to wring his fat neck; he'd like to choke some manners into the swine.

But his anger had short life. He was too busy to harbor resentment; he had his note to cash, his bills to pay, his chest to pack, a drink with this man, a handclasp with that and a jubilant farewell of a frowning and noncommittal Pedersen.

Now the beach was behind him and he was close aboard the *Oloron*. He regarded the tall sides of that tall ship with interested and appraising eyes. She stood up in the water like a church, for all she was laden for sea. A lofty rig, Mr. Peace noticed, crossing a main skysail yard; and possessing also the fashionable double topsail yards. But he'd swear the ship herself antedated that fashion. No suggestion of the clipper about the *Oloron;* why she had the lines of a Liverpool fishwife, a bluff-bowed, round-bellied, broad-bottomed old Betsy, no less. She had an extraordinarily long and high poop. She looked comfortable.

"Sound as a dollar for all her years," said the boatman, remarking Mr. Peace's gaze. "English built in '45, I've heard tell, and in the Australian trade until the clippers run her out. They don't build ships like that nowadays, Mister."

"Oh, an old Australian packet, is she?" said Mr. Peace.

That explained the long poop. Passengers. She'd be comfortable all right.

"I mind when she first came on the coast," went on the boatman. "Let's see, that was ten, eleven years ago. Just after the war. I mind there was quite a bit o' talk about her on the front. One of the first ships they says to clear from a rebel port. New Orleans to Liverpool, and then out here. Had the old single tops'ls them days."

"I guessed she had," said Mr. Peace.

"Lamont had her rerigged a few years ago, over at Whitson's yard," said the boatman. "She'd lost two sticks off Point Reyes because his luck says to carry on in spite o' —— and high weather. At least, that was the talk on the front. Queer feller, that Captain Lamont, with his luck this and his luck that. Ain't that so, Mister?"

"Ump," said Mr. Peace. He spat over the gunwale again, aiming at and hitting a

piece of driftage. "None of my business," he added, and the tone implied it was none of the boatman's business either.

But he overdid his reproof. Instead of subduing the boatman, it nettled him, and he promptly heaved up and fired the heaviest shot in his locker.

"I says it was a rum go, my putting the *Oloron's* second mate aboard," said he. "Why, it was just yesterday I put the *Oloron's* second mate ashore. Hailed me when I was coming back from putting the skipper o' the *Red Jacket* aboard. Sitting on the ladder he was, fair frantic to be took off. Oh, he was in a state, he was, and he swears all the way to the beach about that Jude and his ways, and he says if he can't go to sea in a Christian ship he'll stay ashore for good. Scared stiff, he was, if you ask me."

Mr. Peace yawned, ostentatiously.

"I was surprized at him," said the boatman, "seein' who he was."

He paused, and waited for Mr. Peace to ask the question.

"Well, who was he?"

"Tall, ginger-headed goat, name o' Taffy Lewis," was the triumphant response. "You'll have heard of Taffy Lewis, Mister. He's known as a holy terror, he is. But the old *Oloron* was too much for him. I took him ashore, and to think here I'm taking you aboard to fill his shoes."

The boatman's victory was complete enough. Mr. Peace was sitting up straight, regarding him with wide and startled eyes. Taffy Lewis, the notorious Taffy Lewis, one of the roughest, toughest bucko mates under the flag, and he was going aboard a job that was too much for Taffy Lewis!

"Phew!" said Mr. Peace.

IV

"BOWCHER, Mister," said the stout, whiskery man who met Mr. Peace as he followed his gear aboard.

"Peace, Mister," said Mr. Peace.

They shook hands solemnly. Mr. Bowcher sat down on a step of the poop ladder close by and began to pick his teeth with a large silver-mounted quill which he drew from his vest pocket. Silence for a moment while they furtively inspected each other.

"This mate," thought Mr. Peace, "is not so solid as he looks."

The thought had no reference to Mr. Bowcher's body which, if stout, looked firm and healthy. Mr. Peace was thinking of the man inside the body. Mr. Peace sensed something in the spirit of the man he couldn't quite find name for; "soft" wasn't exactly the word. Lacking dash and go was a better description. Queer eyes. They bulged and kept rolling about. Bad teeth. "Slack"—that was the word.

All this in Mr. Peace's mind while he ostensibly inspected the ship with his gaze. He didn't see anything to cause him to change his judgment of the man next to him. There was some work about forward under the overseeing of the boatswain; but the hands went about it languidly without hurry or interest. This was shocking to Mr. Peace, for he had been trained in smart ships, where dash and go was everything. He noticed that the main course had a very lubberly stow, and he saw an Irish pennant fluttering here and there aloft. The decks were messy. The *Oloron* looked pretty slovenly to him.

It was Mr. Bowcher who first spoke.

"Peace, did you say, Mister? Peace. Aye, that name would tickle the Old Man."

Mr. Peace bridled instantly.

"I can do my work without any help from my name, Mister!" he snapped.

Mr. Bowcher was undisturbed.

"To be sure you can, Mister," he assented. "I can see with half an eye you're a sailor. I meant no disparagment by the remark, sir, none whatever. It was just that knowing Captain Lamont and how he picks his mates." The hairy lips cracked into a wry smile. "Why, Mister, I'm first mate of this vessel because I happen to be a seventh son. Fact, sir. Not that I don't know my business, Mister. I've carried a master's ticket these ten years past. I can do my work, too. But—" Mr. Bowcher glanced sidewise and lowered his voice to a heavy whisper—"in this ship, Mister, it's luck that counts, not work."

"Huh!" said Mr. Peace.

This was rank heresy to the faith he had been trained in. He thought of the captain's message to the mate, and delivered it.

"I know," said Mr. Bowcher. "We always sail on a Sunday. Luck, you know. Do you believe in luck, Mister?"

"No. In work," said Mr. Peace, promptly. "Hard work and a smart ship, that's my style."

"That's good, that's very good," said Mr. Bowcher. "Don't you let them change you, Mister. Don't you half believe what you hear—or see. Work, that's it, that's everything. God helps them what helps themselves, that's Bible, isn't it Mister? Aye, but how about Satan? Tell me that, Mister, how about Satan?"

Mr. Bowcher was agitated. His unease was visible in his restive eyes. He kept glancing sideways towards the entrance to the cabin alley. His voice had again lowered to a whisper.

"What are you driving at?" was Mr. Peace's startled but blunt question.

"In this ship," whispered the mate. He paused. "Mr. Lewis—" he began again. "It don't do to believe too hard in luck," he finished lamely.

"Why did Taffy Lewis clear out?" demanded Mr. Peace.

Mr. Bowcher looked more uneasy than ever.

"Why—why—"

He leaned forward and breathed softly—

"Jude."

"Jude?" echoed Mr. Peace blankly.

"Don't you know about this ship?" was Mr. Bowcher's surprized query.

"Never heard of her before this morning," answered Mr. Peace. "But I can see there's something very queer about her. This Jude, eh? Everybody mentions him. Why, you'd think he was the devil—the way they speak of him."

"He is," breathed Mr. Bowcher.

"Good lord!" exclaimed Mr. Peace.

"Who dat say Jude?" piped a new voice, thin, high and imperative.

The mate drew in his breath, sharply. He seemed to shrink and freeze inside his clothes.

"Why, the fellow's afraid!" flashed across Mr. Peace's mind as he turned towards the intruder.

A wizened old negro was standing in the cabin entrance regarding the two mates. A benevolent looking old darky, thought Mr. Peace. He was dressed in white, and had patches of white wool scattered over his polished black skull, and his white teeth gleamed in a wide smile.

"You Jude, the steward?" demanded Mr. Peace.

The negro stepped out on deck, and approached with an exaggerated shuffling walk. He was very old, old and bent and frail. He looked as if a stiff puff of wind would blow him away. His manner was servile; his voice less so.

"Ole Judas, 'at's me," he announced. "Who yo? What' foh yo call dis Jude?"

"I'm Mr. Peace, the new second mate," exclaimed Mr. Peace. "The skipper gave me a message for you."

"Message foh Jude, yas sah," said the old man.

Now he was close, Jude's benevolence was not so visible. Mr. Peace was gazing into Jude's eyes. Jude's eyes gave him the creeps. They were the prominent feature of the withered, emaciated face. The eyeballs looked swollen and liquid and were yellowish in color, the pupils were as hard and polished as twin black agates, and deep in them were little pin points of light, minute spots of fire. Queer eyes for a steward, thought Mr. Peace, queer eyes for any man. As if some imprisoned wild thing were looking out of the feeble body.

"Captain Lamont said to tell you," stated Mr. Peace, "that he would be bringing his wife aboard with him in the morning. To make the voyage with us, he said."

There was a little clicking sound behind him. It was Mr. Bowcher's tooth pick being bitten in two. But Jude betrayed no agitation. Only his eyes showed that he heard and understood the message. Mr. Peace sensed that the news was a shock. Jude stood there staring up at him, quite motionless for a long moment; then, abruptly, he turned his back on Mr. Peace and shuffled back into the cabin. After he had disappeared they on deck heard his voice, a thin he-he-he of mirthless laughter.

"Well, a bit of a surprize, Mister," ventured Mr. Peace after a moment's unpleasant silence. "That news pretty near knocked the nigger off his pins."

The mate rumbled something in his throat. The fancy quill lay in two pieces on the deck, and with hands that visibly trembled he was stuffing tobacco into his pipe. The news had certainly knocked Mr. Bowcher off his pins.

"One would think," said Mr. Peace, pointedly, "that the skipper was committing murder instead of matrimony."

"He's likely to be doing both," responded Mr. Bowcher in an oddly shaken voice.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Peace.

"Listen," admonished the mate.

A noise came surging out of the cabin. A

noise like no noise Mr. Peace had ever heard before, faint at first, a kind of rhythmic groaning, quickly swelling into a throbbing, coughing roar. It was an indescribably savage sound, menacing, fear inspiring; it made the air throb, it made Mr. Peace's heart throb. Abruptly it ceased.

"Great Scott, what was that?" cried Mr. Peace.

"Jude on his devil-drum," said Mr. Bowcher. "And there'll be the —— to pay," he added. Suddenly he began to curse with a whole-souled abandon, and he cursed so ably and thoroughly that Mr. Peace's professional admiration was aroused. "Oh, the fool!" the mate concluded. "The blankety-blanked double blanked fool!"

He didn't say so, but Mr. Peace understood he was referring to the captain.

"Well, this is a business, now, isn't it?" prompted Mr. Peace, hoping for more light —or more swearing.

"It is," was the short answer. The mate thrust his pipe into his mouth and got to his feet. Mr. Peace noticed that the pipe was trembling between the man's teeth. "And your name is Peace," said Mr. Bowcher, bitterly, as he strode away forward.

"Now, just what did you mean by that?" muttered Mr. Peace to himself.

V

IN THE icy darkness of 4 A.M. Mr. Peace turned out with the rest of the crew. As soon as he poked his nose out on deck he said to the mate—

"I smell weather, Mister."

Mr. Bowcher sniffed and assented. Said he—

"That Jude."

Mr. Peace didn't know what he meant, and he was immediately too busy to prosecute inquiries. But indeed he didn't think anything about Mr. Bowcher's remark. He had already put the mate down as a queer fish who was as superstitious as a forecastle granny. But afterward Mr. Peace wondered if Mr. Bowcher could have had a premonition.

Afterward Mr. Peace also wondered why he himself hadn't received a premonition. Surely he should have had a forewarning, a spark leaping the gap from shore to ship to inform his faithful heart. Mr. Peace was deeply read in the published romance of the day; he believed in disembodied love and the telephathic communications between linked souls. All the best novels gave illustrations. Indeed, was not he a living illustration? Was not his soul linked to another? Then why in ——, he pondered, hadn't he received his premonition?

Already Mr. Peace placed his love in a category by itself. Was it not a singular case? Who else had ever felt as he felt for a mere memory of a woman with whom he had never spoken in ordinary speech? But words had not been needed in their blessed communion! Who else ever experienced such exaltation of spirit at mere thought of white face and moving form?

Ah, thought Mr. Peace, his grand passion was different from and much, much grander than other grand passions. It was not an ordinary love, indeed no. It was most extraordinary. Scott or Lytton or Mrs. Southworth or any of them never depicted such a love. Love—why, his love was a worship, a worship of beauty unmarred by truth.

Of course, Mr. Peace didn't phrase it exactly so; in fact he didn't bother to phrase it at all. He just felt it. He felt that something beautiful and terrible had taken possession of him. Gales of ecstasy blew through his being, blown to him across intervening spaces by the Spanish Tornado. Then why didn't he get a blast of forewarning?

But he didn't to the best of his knowledge. He slept soundly and dreamlessly his first night aboard the *Oloron*. When he went back in his mind, he had to confess with shame that instead of closing his eyes upon thoughts of the loved one, he closed them upon self-congratulation that he was in the easiest bunk and most comfortable room he ever owned aboard ship. That, he concluded, was perhaps the trouble. His heart had not been open to a message.

Quite unwarned, Mr. Peace faced the gray, lowering dawn and beheld the approach of the squat, side-wheel tugboat that was to tow the *Oloron* to sea. When the tug came alongside to discharge her passengers, since all hands were busy forward at the anchor capstan, Mr. Peace and the cook took her lines aboard. Then Mr. Peace stepped to the side to give the woman a hand over the rail if she required it.

He had seen her on the tug's decks as the craft approached, standing beside Captain

Lamont, a nearly formless feminine figure, swaddled in a cloak. He regarded her with indifference mingled with a faint resentment. Mr. Peace held to the ancient faith that a woman had no business aboard a man's ship. He hardly looked at her as she followed the captain up the ladder. Not interested. Just the skipper's wife.

But then—

Although the lady extended a hand for assistance when she footed the rail, it was the captain who turned and took that hand and helped her inboard. As for Mr. Peace, he was suddenly quite incapable of movement. He could just gape with dropped jaw, and eyes that had grown as big and round almost as the ringbolts in the deck.

Mr. Peace was experiencing the rudest shock of his young life. For, as she paused on the rail above him, he saw for the first time the lady's face. *The face!* The face that visited him in his dreams. The white, sad face, the glowing, somber eyes. Her face! No wonder Mr. Peace was, in his own after-phrase, quite hornswoggled.

"Ah, good morning, Mister—ah—" greeted Captain Lamont. And then to his wife he added with a trace of eagerness in his hesitant voice, "My dear, let me present the—ah—gentleman of whom I spoke, the one, you know, with the—ah—name. Mr. Peace, ma'am. Mr. Peace, ah—my wife, suh."

The second mate could only gape and goggle. He was so rigid with surprize he couldn't bend his back, and his attempt to acknowledge the introduction was a sorry stutter.

The black eyes were regarding him curiously. The lips parted in a smile in which there was little gaiety. "You surprize', Meester Peese?" Her voice was a weighty contralto, almost masculine in its tones. "You mus' see the dance. You mus' have see Carmencita?"

Mr. Peace nodded dumbly.

"My wife has—ah—forsaken the—ah—stage," said Captain Lamont. "It would be better—ah—not to mention, you know, Mister—ah—past career—"

His voice trailed away. His voice was nervous, anxious. He kept glancing over his shoulder even when addressing Mr. Peace. "My dear, we might—ah—inspect the cabins, and see—ah—Jude." He spoke to Mr. Peace again, almost in a whisper. "Mister, you told—Jude?"

Again Mr. Peace nodded. He even managed to mouth stuttering "Y-yes, sir."

The pair turned away. But the lady's heavy voice was distinct in the second mate's ears.

"I like heem, your luck man, Pedro. So young, so clean, a nice boy, heem. Now you show the ol' neegar you 'fraid for."

They went into the poop, and Mr. Peace went about his interrupted work. But he was a changed young man. So markedly changed that the boatswain presently remarked to the sailmaker:

"That greaser, 'e's gone and got 'imself a snoot full. Just look at the glassy eye 'e' as."

But if the second mate went about his work for a space with a fixed and glassy glare in his eyes, it was because his real gaze was inward and he was contemplating with amazement and despair the ruins of the beautiful temple which had suddenly tumbled about his head. Where was his idol, his goddess? Alas, she was suddenly become a common thing of flesh and blood, a woman who got married like any other woman, and she'd picked a pretty limp specimen, if you asked him. Oh, Carmencita, where the soft music of your voice, where the sweet odors of your spirit! Bah! She wasn't the person he'd thought her. Boy! That's what she called him. Nice boy! Mr. Peace could hate her for that.

He had no time to marvel how this thing had come about. Just now he was stuffed to bursting with a heart-wrenching sense of tragedy. His grand passion was on the rocks.

A nice boy! Oh, the pure devotion he had wasted upon this unworthy object! Tricked, that was it. Communion of souls, waves of love—bah! All stuff and nonsense, he savagely reflected. The truth was, he had made a —— fool of himself. He had made a fool of himself before himself. And that is a very, very bitter thought to a man of twenty-two.

VI

IT WAS such a bitter thought that Mr. Peace soon spat it out and bundled his tragedy into a corner of his mind while he gave himself over to the necessary work of the hour. He really couldn't help doing this. The work was urgent. He simply had no

time today for mooning or moaning over a murdered love. No time even for oaths, save those oaths of a workmanlike character directed at the hands. The ship was seaward bound, weather was brewing, and the decks were a holy hurrah's nest that must be cleaned up in jig time. Bottles of waterfront tanglefoot smuggled aboard from the tug promptly corrupted most of the crew; those hands who weren't drunk were lubbers.

The day passed in a hurricane of hard work, hard words and occasional hard blows, while order and system slowly emerged from chaos. The weather Mr. Peace's nose predicted lay lurking off the Farallones, and before those barren rocks were fairly astern, the *Oloron* was dancing in the face of a stiff and rising southwest gale. All in all, it was as lively a first day out as Mr. Peace could remember.

But with the nightfall and the choosing and setting of the watches came a period of alert leisure during which a man had time to wonder and think. When Mr. Peace came up at midnight to relieve the mate, after a short hour in his bunk, he was like nothing so much as a human question mark, and he had four lonely hours in which to find answers.

The ship was long since snugged down to storm canvas and taking the gale at a fair slant for an offing. Indeed, she was shortened down much more than was necessary, Mr. Peace thought. In his last ship, he explained to Mr. Bowcher, it would have had to blow a sight harder than this before Bully Padden stripped her down to such a beggarly spread as reefed upper topsails and doubled-reefed foresail. There was such a thing as being too cautious, hinted Mr. Peace.

"The Old Man's thinking of what's behind this dirt," said Mr. Bowcher. Then, as he went below, he added a single word, "Jude."

Mr. Peace snorted. Bowcher and his Jude! Why, that steward was a regular Old Man of the Sea to Bowcher. What did the man mean to imply? That Jude was behind this blow? Huh! Stuff and nonsense! One would think that nigger was a Russian Finn or something.

But as a matter of fact, Mr. Peace was not so scornful as he pretended to himself. He wasn't worried exactly. Nothing to worry about. But he was disquieted, and he roamed the unsteady poopdeck nervously, peering into the wet wind as though he would uncover some strange secret in that black quarter. It was up to a man to keep his weather eye always lifted in this packet, he told himself. No telling what dashed thing might happen. This Jude, and that luck, and a skipper who bounced about like a scared cat!

SEA-BRED and sensing ships as other men sense clothes, by the feel, the young second mate was mystified and disquieted by the *Oloron*. He had the feel of her, and it was like the feel of no other ship he had known. Not the timbers of the vessel or the founding of her gave him puzzled thought; it was something less tangible. It was the feel of the soul of the ship; the smell, as it were, of the air she moved in. Something was wrong in the *Oloron*, something was very wrong. That was as near as Mr. Peace could come to explaining to himself the cause of his disquiet. Something poisonous, something menacing in the air of the ship.

Others felt it. Mr. Peace knew that. The hands forward had the feel, too. That was why he couldn't pry a chantey out of them during the heavy work of making sail; that was why the watch fisted the braces with never a hauling cry. They were a seamanly crowd on the whole, too, and had had drink in them to make them merry and reckless; but instead they were silent and sullen. Even the tar-pickled old boatswain was glum. The feel of the ship—that was the explanation. Something was wrong in the *Oloron*, and the foreguard felt it.

The afterguard felt it, too. It wasn't he alone who was nervous. Old Bowcher! Why the man was scared to death of something or other.

"Jude," says he.

Huh! As if that decrepit old black servant were the devil himself! But Bowcher said he was. And Old Pedersen, ashore, had called the *Oloron* a "deffel-ship". What —— rot, said Mr. Peace. And yet, he must confess, there was something about that Jude that gave a body the creeps. Mr. Peace thought about Jude, recalled his almost noiseless shuffle, his manner of sliding in and out of the dining cabin, when a man was eating, like a black wraith.

"He doesn't walk. He wriggles like a snake," said Mr. Peace.

Then that impression Jude gave of always seeing everything whether he was looking or not. That nigger's eyes, thought Mr. Peace, were what did the business. There was something in the unwinking, reptilian glare of that old codger's eyes that made a fellow feel actually queasy. He wouldn't be a bit surprized if it turned out that Jude's eyes and nothing else ailed the ship. A malignant old rascal, that Jude, and Mr. Peace guessed he had the skipper under his black thumb.

He had learned something about Captain Lamont which he thought rather explained that peculiar man.

"Louisiana creole," said Mr. Bowcher in reply to a direct question. "Frenchified and Spanishfied by blood, you know, and a bit niggerish in his way of thinking, by reason of Jude having had him to care for since he was a youngster. Not, Mister," Mr. Bowcher added, hurriedly, "that I'm saying anything against Jude, y'understand."

AS THE second mate walked the deck during this long and lonely middle watch he tried to fathom his understanding. Just what did he understand, anyway? That the sinister yet invisible shadow which lay upon the ship was a sort of emanation from Jude? Aye, that's what it amounted to. Bosh! Bowcher was a superstitous granny, and just as niggerish in his way of thinking as the Old Man could be. No wonder the hands were sullen, what with the reputation of the ship as a "deffel-ship" and the spectacle before their eyes of the captain and the mate affrighted of a shadow. Jude's shadow. Mr. Peace couldn't see where the negro had done anything to scare anybody except look. Well, you could bet your bottom dollar, vowed he, that Charley Peace was one manjack who wasn't to be bluffed by a look.

The unvoiced boast was still on his mind's tongue when it had a sudden and startling test. Mr. Peace had just been forward to inspect the sidelights with his own eyes and let the lookout know he'd better keep his eyes peeled if he knew what was good for him. Coming aft again, he had reached the waist when, to his surprize, he saw the men of his watch grouped about the main fiferail. They had been keeping the watch in the sheltered lee of the roundhouse where the tradesmen slept and where they would be handy to a hail from the poop. Mr. Peace stepped towards them, opening his mouth to bawl a question. It had flashed into his mind that the skipper had come on deck while he was forward and given a job over his head. But even as he had this thought, he discarded it.

A bolt of lightning zigzagged across the black sky and revealed the ship in a blast of livid light, bare of shadow, black, taut cordage, in angular relief, wet, shining decks aslant, a group of terrified oilskin-clad men huddled together at the fiferail, and aft on the weather main deck—the figure of Jude.

He stood at the rail, facing the wind and rain and flying spray, his bare head thrown back and his arms lifted to the lightning-veined sky as if invoking the genius of the storm. The infernal light of the blast seemed to isolate and bathe the negro, so brightly was he revealed, and it painted the old man's writhed features with an expression so utterly evil and hateful that Mr. Peace was like to cry out at the sight. Men near him did cry out. Then the brief instant of light was gone, and to dazzled eyes the succeeding darkness was inky. Down the wind came the rumble and boom of thunder.

Mr. Peace did not wait for vision to be restored. He blundered blindly but swiftly through the darkness towards the spot. His pride was behind his rush. He was in fact as startled as any man in his watch by that sudden apparition, but he wasn't going to admit it, even to himself. No, he was going to lay hold of that nigger and give him a piece of his mind. What did the beggar mean, coming out on deck at five bells in the mid-watch and scaring the hands out of their wits? He'd learn him better, by ——!

But there was no Jude there. The man was gone; slipped back into the cabin, no doubt. A second flash of lightning, almost as brilliant as the first, showed no Jude on that deck. So Mr. Peace was compelled to regain his composure by means of hard words flung at the men instead of at Jude. He hailed them aft, and sweated them up at a needless job on the lee braces, for the sake of their morale and his own.

Back again on the poop, the second mate encountered the captain, fully dressed, but without head covering or oilskins. Sink the man, thought Mr. Peace, doesn't he ever sleep? This was the third time since midnight that the Old Man had been on deck in

this same fair weather rig, to wander about aimlessly for a few minutes and then disappear below again, without having opened his lips to his respectful and expectant watch officer.

But this time he spoke. Indeed, he immediately hooked on to Mr. Peace and steered him to the companion hatch, in which shelter they could converse without shouting at each other.

But not a word at first of the weather or the working of the ship. It was something else that troubled Captain Lamont.

"You saw him, Mister?" said he. "You saw—ah—Jude down there?"

"Why, yes, sir, I did," replied Mr. Peace. "The man came on deck and scared the watch. The hands are frightened of him for some reason, sir. I tried to lay hands on the beggar, but he was too quick for me, sir."

"Good ——, don't you ever lay hands on him, suh!" exclaimed the captain, the hesitancy for once gone out of his voice. "Why, if you laid hands on him when he was like that, Mr. Peace, he'd—why, he'd slay you!"

"Y-yes, sir," stammered Mr. Peace.

He was more upset by the captain's agitation than by his words. That tottering old nigger slay him! Huh!

"What was he—ah—doing, Mr. Peace," pursued the captain. "You say you saw him. Was he—ah—"

"Why, sir, I can't say he was doing anything to speak of," replied Mr. Peace. Now that he thought of it, what had the steward done to cause all this excitement? "I saw him in a lightning flash," he went on. "He was standing at the weather rail, sir, and wasn't doing anything particular, unless it was to shake his fists at the sky. But he looked sort of—well, queer. Wild, you know, sir. I guess that was what scared the watch."

"Looked queer?" said the captain. "Shaking his fists, you say, Mister? Was he incanting, suh? Ah—was he?"

"Couldn't say, sir," answered Mr. Peace. He couldn't, either. He didn't know what incanting meant or what the Old Man was driving at.

"He was, of course, he was," muttered Captain Lamont, more to himself than to Mr. Peace. Then his voice filled again. "That's bad, Mister, very bad, suh," said he. "Do you think the—ah—wind is making, suh?"

"No, sir," Mr. Peace said promptly. "It's settled down to a steady blow, I think, sir. We might show a bit more canvas."

"But it will make, Mister," interrupted the other. "Ah—yes—it will make like fury, suh. I'll get my oilskins and take the deck with you. Call the watch, Mister, and we'll—ah—take the foresail off her." He descended the companion, but paused at the turn of the ladder and looked up at the stunned second mate. "And I thought, Mister, you were—ah—Peace, you know," he said.

VII

"WELL, I'll be eternally scuppered!" Mr. Peace said to himself as he sent a hail forward for all hands and dispatched a boy to call the mate. He said much more to Mr. Bowcher when that worthy appeared on deck fully clad before the boy could have had time to awaken him.

"I knew it would come," said Mr. Bowcher. "I was waiting for the call, Mister."

"How did you know?" exclaimed Mr. Peace.

"Saw Jude on deck a while ago," was the answer. "I knew he'd be out. I was watching for him."

Mr. Peace snorted and swore with exasperation. Bowcher, too. But, of course, for wasn't Bowcher as daffy over the nigger as the Old Man, himself? He had a picture in his mind of the mate staying awake all through his watch below, and watching through the port hole in his room, which opened on the deck, for Jude to make his appearance. Which, in fact, was exactly what Mr. Bowcher had done.

"He's going to take the foresail off her!" cried Mr. Peace.

"Jude was making more dirt out there," replied the mate with a wave to windward.

Mr. Peace swore again. He walked away. But his curiosity was greater than his anger, and he returned to the other's side.

"She needs that course, Mister," exclaimed he. "The wind's not making. Why, the glass is rising. In a proper ship we'd have been making sail hours ago."

For a moment he thought the mate wasn't going to reply to this. Mr. Bowcher kept his shoulder to him and gazed over the poop rail at the roundhouse. Over the wind a pounding on the lee door of this deck house

could be heard, and a hoarse voice bawling to the sail-maker and carpenter within to "show a leg there, Trades—it's all hands!" But then, just as Mr. Peace was about to speak again and even more forcibly, the mate turned to him and, cupping his hands, rumbled into Mr. Peace's ear.

"She's not a proper ship. You don't know, Mister, that Jude! You don't know that Jude at all."

"—— that Jude!" cried Mr. Peace hotly and with no effort to confine his words to the other's ear alone. "This hooker is a madhouse! What d'ye mean, Mister? That old nigger is God Almighty and Lord o' the weather? I'm surprized, sir!"

This was raw cheek, coming from a sprig of a second mate to a seasoned first mate who was also a past master. Mr. Peace knew it, and expected the other to blow up. He didn't care. It was a time, he thought, for downright talk.

"I never heard such rot in my life!" he bawled at the mate.

But the surprize he so scornfully voiced to the mate was as nothing to the surprize he experienced a short time later when he went aloft to oversee and direct the furling of the sail. He stationed himself at the bunt, and on either hand the crew lay out on the long yard-arms, while the clewed-up canvas threshed and banged in mad effort to tear free from all restraining bands. Mr. Peace cursed bitterly; it was an insane business, entirely. The ship needed that spread. With the pressure of the course lifted she was already doing Swedish calisthenics. He hoped that —— Jude would be floated out of his bunk.

All hands and the cook on the foreyard, and Mr. Peace encouraging them by voice and example.

"Bowse her up, bullies! Fist her up! Pay Paddy Doyle, you lousy swabs! Up she comes, bullies! And again!"

It would take more wind than this to flatten Mr. Peace's heavy weather voice.

More wind they got. Wind that ripped buttoned southwesters off men's heads, ripped the great sail out of men's arms and set it to banging like salvos of artillery, ripped the lurid words out of the second mate's mouth and blasted them away without even a whisper of them lingering in his own ears. The wind made like fury even as the captain promised. It came out of the black windward sky like a blast out of the deep, a sudden, furious, shrieking squall that pressed the ship down until more than one terrified man, clinging for dear life to the jackstay, though the yardarm was dipping under water. The great yard was wrenching and shaking in a fearful fashion. Mr. Peace was sure something would give way, a lift or brace or even the great wrought-iron tye itself. He tried to get at his clasp knife in his trousers' pocket, inside his oilskins. A whirling eyebolt, torn loose from the sail, struck him a terrific blow on the head, nearly knocking him from his foothold. A crack like a rifle shot, behind him, and a movement of the mast told him a back stay had parted. The topmast would snap in a minute, he feared, if he didn't do something to ease the strain.

The huge sail was like a series of great bags filled with fighting tigers. To fist it was impossible, though Mr. Peace bellowed commands to do so, and himself tried to beat down the canvas. The loose eyebolt battered him again and again on the head and shoulders and back; it was like a blackjack in the hands of some invisible demon who was determined to hurl him to his death. It was like a weapon in the hands of Jude. For suddenly Jude's voice, clear and thin, came cutting through the roaring blast to the ears of the men aloft. It was a hollow voice and it seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere, from below, from aloft, from the thundering canvas itself, a reedy, screeching insane laughter, and then the words:

"Who dat fool Jude? Who dat fool Jude?"

Mr. Peace fumbled for his knife again and dragged it out. Idle to hope to furl this sail now. The men on the arms could do no more than hang on, and with that fiendish cry in their ears there was no strength in them for a fight. Indeed, there was a chill in his own breast and a feeling that some devilish machination had caused all this uproar.

"Who dat fool Jude? He-he-he!"

It was horrifying and most unnerving.

Another voice reached his ears faintly. He recognized it as the mate's voice, and a glance downward showed him a thick blot in the screaming darkness which he knew was Mr. Bowcher clinging to the rigging.

"Cut away aloft if you can't furl, cut away!" cried this second voice.

With the open knife in his hand, the

second mate hesitated for very shame of the deed. To cut away a stout, new sail, already clewed up and reefed as well, and with both watches on the yardarms? A crime, no less; a deed to make a seaman ashamed forever. He'd be —— if he would! "If you can't furl!" he said. Well, he'd furl. Let heaven blow itself inside out and every black demon out of hell screech in his ears! He'd not cut away; she could jump the stick out of her, she could roll herself under before he'd cut away. He'd show 'em!

And he did. Charley Peace went sort of Berserk there on the foreyard. The fury that filled him was a veritable madman's frenzy, and the wild, screaming oaths that poured out of his brazen throat were as awful to the ears that heard them as any screech that Jude could muster. Nor did Mr. Peace stop with words. He went out on the yardarms, first to the weather and then to the lee, stepping past the clinging men on the dancing footrope, bawling commands and horrid threats at them, kicking and cuffing them free of the paralysis of terror, by providing them with a fresh and more urgent fear.

"Fist the canvas or I'll throw you off the yard!"

That was the gist of Mr. Peace's gentle counsel. The hands believed it. So did Mr. Peace. The wind did not lessen, and the black seas still snatched at the dizzy wretches down to leeward, but the wet, iron-hard canvas began to be beaten down by flailing arms, and fisted, and the sail was inch by inch skinned up upon the yard.

Back amidships, at the great bellying bunt, the second mate was a watch in himself. Finger ends split and bleeding, blood streaming down his face from the gashes inflicted by the now imprisoned eyebolt, hanging on with one foot and an eyebrow, he heaved and lifted, heaved and rolled, spat the blood out of his mouth with a curse, and howled the ancient yardarm chantey with such a bull-like, rousing roar that no man on the yard but heard and responded with rising heart and rising voice and courage-strengthened muscles.

No smooth port stow this. It was get her up and pass the gaskets, —— you! Up and in, up and in, with the long row of human bodies laying across the captured sail, holding it fast, while arms plunged down for more. In rolls, in lumps, any way and every way, the sail was made fast to the yard. But it was made fast. Made doubly fast with spare gaskets from below, ere Mr. Peace would call enough. He'd show 'em! And so he had.

The bleak day had long since dawned when Mr. Peace at last sent his watch below, and himself went aft for a smoke-o and a dry change ere he relieved the mate for breakfast. There had been other bitter jobs after the foresail was stowed, preventer stays to set up and much wet jockeying at the braces on the sea-drenched deck. A tired body but a proud and saucy humor was Mr. Peace's possession this moment. He'd showed 'em. Aye, that he had, from the skipper down.

He'd showed them that Charley Peace was a man, by heaven! No half-baked, snivelling apprentice just out of his time, but a proper and seasoned hard case who could do his own work and others' work, too. Nice boy. Huh! Let her ask the forecastle how nice a boy he was; they knew the edge of his voice and the weight of his hand. Let her ask Jude; he'd tell her that the second mate was one man he hadn't bluffed. If she wanted to know, Charley Peace had more backbone than the brooding freak who pretended to skipper the vessel and twice the guts of that swab, Bowcher!

It was a curious circumstance that the woman should bob into his mind in this moment of triumph. Afterward, Mr. Peace wondered about it. He wondered if this time it was a premonition. He thought that, considering everything, it must be a sign of something.

Except a brief wonder now and then how she might be standing the weather, the second mate hadn't thought of the captain's bride since the hour of her coming aboard. He had put that weakness out of his mind, as he believed, when he discovered how his traitor heart had deceived and made sport of him. Love? Bah! No more of that mush for Charley Peace! Nor had he clapped eyes upon the woman since yesterday morning when she and the captain went into the cabin. Confined to her room, Bowcher had informed him unsolicited. Seasick, said Bowcher, but he said it in that queer double meaning manner he had, as if it was something else—the nigger, of course—that imprisoned the woman. Mr. Peace hadn't paid any attention to the news and had hardly thought about it.

Yet now in the privacy of his room she

suddenly came flooding into his mind. All at once the very air of the room was spiced with her presence. She seemed to be there, right there in the room with him. Not Mrs. Lamont, the skipper's wife, but La Carmencita, the girl of the Bella Union. She hovered over him, smiled on him, caressed him with her eyes. There was something in her eyes he had not before seen. They beseeched. They asked something of him. The soft murmur of her voice ravished his ears. No words, yet she was begging him to do something. Like a call for help. Oh, it was marvellous and thrilling. He felt the same grand thrills he had so eagerly sought and cultivated ashore. He was communing with the soul of La Carmencita. Never before had she been so close to him or so real. Never before had she called upon him for help.

After a time Mr. Peace came to himself to discover he was standing half dressed in the middle of the room, staring blankly at the after bulkhead. This wall separated his room from the series of rooms which comprised the captain's apartments, and the marvellous presence that had seemed so real was gone, melted into the wood.

"What's the matter with me!" he exclaimed.

He shook his head, vigorously as if he would shake this nonsense clean out of his skull. What the deuce? Was he going balmy, too, like the rest of the lunatics in this ship? Thus did his reason dispose of the matter. But Mr. Peace was twenty-two, and reason with him was skin deep. The thrill persisted in his breast.

VIII

A LITTLE later, after the second mate had finished breakfast, and while going up to take his watch, he encountered Jude in the after cabin. It was not Mr. Peace's habit to go on deck by way of the after saloon and the companion stairs; he conformed to custom by using the maindeck doors. The cabin meals were laid in the forward or dining saloon, a separate room in the forward end of the cabin space, a relic of the days when the *Oloron* carried passengers to and from the Antipodes, and this was almost the first time Mr. Peace had had occasion to enter the after saloon. This morning green seas were lolloping aboard, and it would be inviting a ducking to step out on the main-deck.

It was dim gloom in the after cabin, the hatch was closed and the skylights tarpaulined. The hanging lamp over the chart table was turned low. In this low light the ancient magnificence of the great room was restored, and it occurred to Mr. Peace as he paused a moment with his hand on the carved newel of the stairs and looked about that in her day the *Oloron* had been a grand ship and this cabin had been a brave show with its golden scroll work, its gleaming brass and polished woods. He peered about, interested, trying to imagine that vanished grandeur.

To him, in this moment, came Jude's laughter, that thin, wicked laughter he had already heard twice since he had been in the ship.

"He-he-he!"

So high and thin it seemed almost disembodied. Following it came Jude's words, edged with that malicious laughter.

"What foh yo look? Look foh peace? He-he! Mis'ar Peace look foh peace? Look foh God? Look foh debbil? Look foh peace? He-he-he!"

At first Mr. Peace couldn't place the position of the speaker, the voice was so faint and thin. Then he detected a patch of white, which was Jude's coat, in the shadow at the other end of the cabin. He could make out the whites of his eyes then and the outline of his figure. Jude was sitting hunched up on the divan in the stern, hugging his bony knees.

"Yo come heah, Mis'ar Mate, yo heah somethin'," said Jude.

Mr. Peace obeyed. He was glad of the opportunity to get close to Jude for a moment, to size up this man who could scare the wits out of burly sailormen, to question him, perhaps.

"Good morning, Jude," he said as he approached. "What are you doing there? Thinking up some fresh way to scare us? Say, what were you trying to do last night, anyway?"

With his head cocked on his shoulder, Jude chuckled up into the second mate's face. It was a sound so thin and sinister it was like a hiss. And sitting huddled in that dark recess, the fellow looked to the second mate like some wild and venomous thing. Like a big spider. Only Jude's eyes were distinct in the gloom; and they were too

distinct, they rolled and glittered and seemed enormous. There was a reek of spirits about Jude, and Mr. Peace sensed the man was drunk.

This didn't surprize Mr. Peace very much. He already understood that the steward was privileged to do about as he pleased. He already understood that this wizened black was the real commander of the ship. What he didn't understand was why?

"Whah dat Jude do las' night?" came the sibilant whisper.

"He-he, whah ol' Jude do las' night? Yo see ol' Jude, yo heah ol' Jude las' night. Yo doan see Ol' Debbil, yo doan heah Ol' Debbil? Ol' Debbil, he come aboard when ol' Jude call. Yas, sah. Ol' Debbil, he heah now. Yas, sah. He-he-he!"

There was something in that drunken gibberish—he couldn't tell what—that pressed like a cold hand against Mr. Peace's heart. Despite himself, cold shivers ran up and down his spine, and involuntarily he glanced behind him as if "Ol' Debbil" might be lurking there. The steward noticed the motion, and was seized with a fit of that evil, almost silent mirth.

"He touch yo? He blow breath on yo? He-he; dat good, dat berry good!" Then Jude's mood changed, and the thin voice became solemn, and in it a menacing note. "Ol' Debbil doan like yo, Mis'ar Mate. Ol' Debbil berry mad. He want dat fores'l las' night. Yo look out Mis'ar Mate Ol' Debbil doan git yo! Ol' Debbil boss ob dis ship. Boss ob Jude, boss ob Boy, boss ob sailors. Boy t'ink he fool Ol' Debbil, t'ink he fool ol' Jude. T'ink he bring de Cross aboard and chase Ol' Debbil out, chase ol' Jude out. De Spanish gal and de Cross in de hand. Ol' Debbil show Boy. Cross doan make palaver in dis ship. Fix dat gal. Ol' Debbil—"

Gradually the words died away to a drunken mumble.

Mr. Peace stared down at the other for a moment, wondering if he would arouse and go on. Jude's head had lolled forward upon his knees; he seemed to be going to sleep. A good job if he never awakened, thought Mr. Peace. A vicious old man. Something poisonous about him—and powerful. But the wrinkle of perplexity was still in the second mate's brow. He was more puzzled about Jude than ever.

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently and turned to go to his relief. He had not taken three steps ere a voice arrested him. Not Jude's voice this time, but another's. Her voice! A low, beseeching voice, hardly audible above the subdued medley of ship noises. He had paused opposite a door on the starboard side, and through the little circular ventilator above the door came the voice. The words were Spanish, and Mr. Peace had none of that lingo save a few waterside oaths gleaned on the West Coast. Yet even this limited and disreputable vocabulary informed him what was happening behind that closed door. Words and phrases that Mr. Peace had hitherto heard used only in vain were being mouthed in reverent accents.

"O Mother of God! O Holy Mother!"

The woman in there was praying. Praying with passion and abandon.

Mr. Peace would have moved on instantly, for he felt it would be a shameful thing to listen further, but Jude's hateful whinny, suddenly audible again, held him. The old villain wasn't asleep; he was laughing again, laughing at the words that came through the door. The thought so infuriated Mr. Peace he immediately swung about upon Jude.

"Stow that laugh, you drunken fool!" he snapped.

Jude stowed the laugh as if the whip-like command had suddenly gagged him. But there was no submission in the malevolent leer with which he met the second mate's angry gaze. His withered face had sunk between his hunched up knees, and was startlingly framed by his white trousers' legs; it was like a black death's head, with only the glittering eyes alive. Horror of the old man began to mingle with Mr. Peace's anger. In that grotesque attitude and dim light, with the agate eyes glaring between twin white pillars, Jude reminded him of some foul harpy lurking in a cavern, peering out before pouncing. Mr. Peace had an impulse to leap upon the creature and stamp him under, to dull the light in those devilish eyes with the heel of his seaboot as he would trample the head of a snake.

Undoubtedly, the negro sensed the other's fury. He seemed to derive pleasure from it and, if his laughter was stilled, there was a gibing note in his voice that was no less offensive to the listener's ears. Suddenly strong, it followed Mister Peace almost to the deck.

"Ol' Jude say yo come heah yo heah

somethin'. Yo heah dat Spanish gal make prayer to de Virgin. Make prayer foh peace, Mis'ar Peace! In de *Oloron* dat gal make prayer to de Cross. Ol' Jude laugh. Ol' Debbil laugh. Boy t'ink he fool Jude, make palaver wid de Cross, git de Mis'ar Peace in de ship. Ol' Jude laugh. Ol' Debbil berry mad. Ol' Debbil say Boy mus' gib de Goat Widout de Horns, say he fix dat gal, say dat Mis'ar Peace better watch out, yas sah. Yo heah, Mis'ar Mate, yo heah?"

The whole speech was in an ascending scale, and the last words, reaching Mr. Peace in the companion hatch, were a veritable screech.

IX

TO DISCIPLINE a steward is a captain's job, not a mate's, and to Captain Lamont Mr. Peace immediately reported Jude's condition. The captain was clinging to the rail at the poop break, his face bleak and dejected, a despondent hump in his shoulders. His appearance astonished Mr. Peace. The man seemed to have aged ten years since yesterday.

Mr. Peace stepped to weather of him and bawled his words through cupped hands.

"The steward's drunk down below, sir! Raving about devils! He'll be disturbing the lady, sir!"

If the second mate had struck with his fist, Captain Lamont would not have flinched more abjectly. Mr. Peace did not actually hear the words, but he saw them formed by Captain Lamont's lips.

"He's come!" said the captain. The following words Mr. Peace did hear, for the captain bawled them into his very face. "And I thought you were Peace!"

With that, the captain rushed below.

Mr. Peace felt as if he had been slapped.

"What does he mean?" he demanded bitterly of the mate. "You'd think he held me to blame for something. I told him the steward was drunk, and he spit 'Peace' at me as if I'd given him the bottle."

The mate was in a talkative mood for once.

"He thought, y'see, your name might count with Jude. He banked on it, Mister. Things like that, names and eyes and the like, mean a lot to Jude. Why, d'ye know, he ran Mr. Lewis out of the ship because that bucko's eyes were mismated. That's Gospel, Mister. Bad luck, says Jude. 'Yo better quit,' says he to Taffy.

"Taffy wasn't going to quit at first on account of the hard times ashore. But Jude changed his mind mighty quick. Jude put a spell on him and let him know about it. And then, all in one afternoon, all in one-half hour, in fact, Mr. Lewis caught afire on account of his pipe touching off some matches in his hip pocket, and burned up fifty dollars in greenbacks, not to mention a blister as big as a frypan, and when he was coming aft from the wash-deck tub where he put the fire out, he slipped on the deck and wrenched his back so bad he could hardly stand, and on top of that, when he was crawling up the poop ladder, a block fell from aloft and cracked him square on top of the head. All in fifteen minutes, Mister. And when Mr. Lewis came around he says he was convinced and he's going ashore.

"That's how there came to be a second mate's berth open so suddenly. And then, Mister, when the Old Man saw a chance to fill that berth with a feller named Peace, why, he jumped at the chance and went right ahead with his plans. Influence of your name, y'see. When he mentioned getting a wife, a week or so back, Jude scared him out o' the notion. But then when he shipped a man named Peace he must have figured he had the devil laid, so to speak, and he went ahead and took a chance. Oh, the fool! Not, y'understand, Mister, that I ain't sorry for Captain Lamont. But in this ship, the way things are—"

Mr. Bowcher finished with a wag of the head that was more condemnatory than a book full of words.

"What gets me," cried Mr. Peace, "is what it's all about! Why shouldn't the skipper get himself a wife, if he wants to? What business is it of the steward's? I tell you, Mister, I'm no Johnny Reb, but it makes me fair sick to see a white man knuckle under like that to a drunken nigger."

"As to the reason," said Mr. Bowcher darkly, "what does the Book say about the sins o' the fathers? As to what's up, why, haven't you found out what's to do in this ship? It's a fight betwixt Jude and the woman, with the immortal soul of Captain Lamont for the prize. That's what it's all about. And Jude'll win, Mister. You'll see. He can't help but win in this ship.

He'll win and he'll kill. He always does. You'll see, Mister."

"Good Lord, you don't mean—" began Mr. Peace.

"Yes. Just that. Death." Despite his inherent scepticism, the second mate was impressed by the mate's solemn manner. "Mark me, Mister, and betwixt you and me personal, Mister, for it don't do to talk about some things in this ship, it don't do to even whisper about them, she'll die, poor woman. Nobody will ever be able to put a finger on any certain thing, and say, 'Jude did it this way.' But she'll finish in some devilish fashion, and you can bet the Old Man will know the right of it. Jude'll have his way. She's seasick down in the starboard cabins right now, isn't she? Aye, maybe. Who's clapped eyes on her since this dirt came upon us? Maybe Jude has already—"

But this was too much for the second mate.

"Oh, —— that for a focsle yarn!" he rudely interrupted. "The woman's all safe and sound, judging by her voice which I've just been listening to. But that cursed black is outside her door gibbering about devils. 'Ol' Debbil' is to get her, and me too, says he. I'm only sorry he's so old I can't teach him manners with my fist."

"The Old Devil!" echoed Mr. Bowcher. Then he used the same words the captain had used. "He's come!" said he. "Then your name is no good!" He looked at Mr. Peace with wide, horrified eyes, as if Mr. Peace were already a corpse stark in gore.

"My ——, where will it end?" cried Mr. Bowcher, and he, too, abruptly deserted the second mate's side and rushed below.

"Confounded queer," Mr. Peace told himself. "Myself, I'll say it will end in Bedlam for all hands if this keeps up."

He had no further confidential talks with the mate. Henceforth, Mr. Bowcher avoided him as if he had the plague, and their intercourse was limited to brief words about the ship's work.

X

FOR three days it blew great guns. No blow-hard-blow-steady gale, but a mean, treacherous onslaught, a monotonous procession of screaming squalls, with the wind apt to shift a handful of points in a jiffy. Moreover, it was an on-shore wind, which the old ship must fight at cost of heavy buffeting as she clawed her way off-shore. A bad, wet time, with hard work and short watches below, and at last the dreary *clank-clank* of the pumps mingling with the voices of the wind. The pump crew raised a chantey without any urging from Mr. Peace. "It's Time to Leave Her, Johnny!" sang they.

The whole of that time Captain Lamont stayed on deck, save for a descent now and then for a mug of coffee or a nip of rum. More often than not even these refreshments were carried up to him by Chang, the cabin boy. It was a —— silly procedure, Mr. Peace thought. The captain was doing more harm than good by staying on deck; he just made his watch officers self-conscious and uncomfortable, and the very look of him frightened the hands. He wandered about the poop like a soul in torment, and if he gave an order, like as not he countermanded it immediately. Why didn't he stay below for a spell and take care of his poor wife, Mr. Peace wondered angrily. So far as he could determine, no one was lifting a finger to serve the woman who remained confined in the starboard cabins. Certainly, the steward was not looking after her.

Jude, in fact, wasn't looking after any one. Jude was secluded in his own room, which was abaft the pantry on the port side. In that great cabin there were rooms to spare, and every man in the afterguard had one to himself. Even Chang had a private cubby-hole into which he vanished when his nearly endless work was finished, and through the door of which crept the pungent odor of burning joss punk. Through the door of Jude's room crept an equally strong smell of sweet Jamaica rum. Mr. Peace would have liked to believe that Jude was immured in his room as punishment, but the facts would not permit this opinion. Midday or midnight, if he poked his nose into the cabin, he would smell that reek of liquor, and very likely hear Jude's voice raised behind the closed door in screeches of insane mirth or in weird chanties which set Mr. Peace's teeth on edge and started him thinking about steaming jungles and leaping black figures about campfires. Once, in the night, he was awakened by a throbbing, coughing roar that seemed to shake the ship. He recognized the sound instantly. It was the same sound he heard the other day when he came aboard. Jude was playing on his devil-drum.

It was the next morning after this serenade that Chips reported the ship making a little water. Captain Lamont straightway lifted his haggard face to the gray sky and declaimed in distrait voice—

"Why hast Thou deserted me?"

In the hearing of the helmsman, too, so that some exaggerated yarn of dire danger was bound to reach the forecastle. Mr. Peace was worse than scandalized; he bit his lip to keep from swearing at his skipper. Where was the man's common sense? What was he squawking about, anyway? What did he expect on the California coast this time of year? And Chips said very plainly the leak was not serious so far and likely to close itself if the weather moderated.

"And if the weather doesn't moderate?" cried the captain.

The carpenter shrugged his thick Dutch shoulders. It was the Old Man's worry, not his.

With half a watch constantly at the pumps, the leak did not gain, nor did it materially lessen. This was bad enough, but nothing to throw a fit about, thought Mr. Peace. But the captain hung over the pumps, and demanded half-hourly soundings of the well. His nervousness communicated itself to the hands. Volunteers mounted the skids and ostentatiously examined the boat lashings. The pump crews put an unmistakable meaning into their dolorous wail, "It's time to leave her, Johnny!" Mr. Peace was disgusted.

All day, this fourth day since leaving port, the wind made and the black squalls hurled themselves upon the ship with ever more frequent fury. When the first dogwatch arrived, it was roaring aloft like a Cape Horn snorter. Before he went to his room, Mr. Peace went forward to get an extra lashing for his sea-chest.

He got more than a fathom or two of rope from the old boatswain. In the dusky, comparatively quiet seclusion of the boatswain's locker the leathery old sailor seized upon the chance to unbosom himself.

"I was hopin', Mister, as 'ow you'd come for'ard. Fact, sir, if you didn't come for'ard, I was making up my mind to go aft to your room, only I couldn't think up no way of gettin' by the mate and the skipper—and—an 'im."

"That so, Bos?" was Mr. Peace's carefully careless comment.

It was quite a comedy. The boatswain was bursting with news and Mr. Peace was bursting with curiosity. But there was dignity to be taken care of. Not for worlds would the second mate have appeared curious. Nor did the boatswain find it easy to phrase his warnings and fears, for the black terror was heavy upon him.

"Just a small piece o' light line, Bos," said Mr. Peace.

"What I'd like to find in this 'ere mess, Mister," replied the boatswain, pawing over some gear, "is a length o' line with a 'angman's noose in the end of it." He glanced about, and lowered his voice to a sharp, fierce whisper. "For that black-a-more!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Peace. "So that old coon has you scared, too?"

"If you knew what I knew," said the boatswain, "if you 'ad heard what I heard no longer ago than this mornin', Mister."

"You've been listening to yarns, m'lad," said Mr. Peace.

The boatswain was a gnarled and weathered sea-ancient quite three times the young man's age, with horn on his hands and gold rings in his ears, a humped and battered survivor of an earlier day. But he was "m'lad" to the youth from aft.

"What have you been hearing about the steward?" prompted Mr. Peace. He eased his conscience about the question by telling himself that it was his duty to find out how forward was feeling and talking. "What have you been hearing, Bos?"

"It ain't what I heard about, it's what I heard," was the somewhat cryptic reply. The boatswain held aloft the lantern and peered suspiciously about the little compartment; it was as if he expected to uncover an eavesdropper in the paints or the coils or lurking in the four-inch space behind the limbers. He used a phrase Mr. Peace had heard more than once from the mate's lips—"It don't do to talk too much in this ship, Mister."

"That's so," Mr. Peace sagely agreed. "Doesn't do to talk too much anywhere, Bos."

"But I was bound to 'ave a word wi' you," the boatswain went on. "Nigh bustin', I been, thinking o' her, poor lass, and you, Mister. 'I'll get a word o' warning to that greaser,' says I to meself, 'in spite o' all, no matter if Jude 'ears and Old Devil puts the spot on me next minute.'

That's what I says, Mister. Providence, I calls it, you comin' for'ard like this."

"Um, well—"

Mr. Peace's dignity was rapidly being submerged beneath the flooding tide of his curiosity. Moreover he was more than a bit impressed by the old man's solemnity and earnestness.

"Spit it out, Bos," he urged. "What's that you were saying about—about her?"

"I was in the lazaret this mornin' breaking out stores for the Chink," said the boatswain. "Right under Jude's room I was, and I could hear 'im plain, Mister. He was up there floppin' about on the floor, sounded like, and singin' out to Old Devil to come into the ship. It made me fair sick to listen, Mister. Callin' on Old Devil to come and get her, and to come and get you, Mister. 'Git dat Spanish gal! Git dat second mate!' That's what he says. 'Learn Boy a lesson,' says he. My ——, if he comes, what can you do, Mister?"

"Laugh at him," promptly answered Mr. Peace. Like most young sailors of his day, Mr. Peace prided himself on his lack of "notions," and this was a fine chance to exhibit his lack. "I don't believe in devils and spirits and such rot, Bos. Where would old Jude be getting powers over devils, old or young. Answer me that Bos. Laugh, Bos, laugh."

"Laugh, will ye," was the grim retort. "'Twill soon be a laugh on the wrong side o' the mouth, young sir. Where will old Jude be getting his powers, says you? If ever you 'ad traded into Benin Bight in the old days, you'd not be asking that question. Jude got his powers in the black, stinkin' jungles be'ind the Slave Coast where no white man has ever been and come out alive. That's Jude, Mister. And if ye knew Guinea Gulf at all, you'd not laugh at a witch-man o' Egbo. Strewth, you wouldn't!"

"All right, I won't," soothed Mr. Peace. "I think this piece of half-inch stuff will do me. You seem to know old Jude, Bos?"

"Knowed him these forty years," was the reply. "But, lor' knows, I never 'oped to be shipmates wi' him, and never would ha' been if I'd kept out o' the Knitting Swede's clutches in Frisco. It's a payment, that's what, for ever being in the trade when a young feller. Oh, my lord, I never thought o' that before. D'ye think, Mister, it could be a judgment, like?"

"Judgment for what?" asked Mr. Peace.

"Nigger snatchin' on the coast," said the boatswain. "Ten years I was in the slavers, Mister—a long time ago, w'en I was a young blade. Runnin' the middle passage from the Gulf to the Indies and the Brazils wi' black-a-mores for the planters. A mortal cruel business, Mister, and shame to any man in it. But I was a hard case them days, and the middle passage paid big money. That's w'en I knew Jude. He was slave-master and luck-doctor for Old Devil, and always sailed wi' him."

"OH, I see. Then this mysterious Old Devil is a man?" said the second mate.

"Was a man, maybe so," replied the boatswain. "He was this Captain Lamont's father, sir. 'Old Devil' Lamont, that's what they called 'im on the coast, niggers and whites both. Old Devil. Admiral o' the middle passage, they called 'im, on account o' his luck runnin' cargoes. Old Devil, because he worshipped the Fiend, and Jude, 'ere, was his priest.

"That's fact, Mister, I kiss the Book on't. I heard the yarn many a time from old 'ands in the trade what knew it was fact. One time in Grand Bassam a Portagee priest cursed out Lamont and told him he was in the devil's own business. 'All right,' says Lamont, 'then I'll worship my master, the devil.' His very words, Mister, so they says.

"'Twas right after that, they says, that Lamont made blood-brother palaver wi' the black King o' Bonney, and shipped Jude, who was the king's chief witch doctor. Ever after, they says, Old Devil Lamont had a *juju* idol o' ebony in his cabin, and before ever he started to run the passage, he would make a sacrifice to it. They says, Mister, they says it was the Goat Wi'out Horns!"

"Eh? What?" exclaimed Mr. Peace, sharply. His mind jumped with the words to Jude and the scene in the cabin. Jude had used that phrase, he recalled. "What did you say, Bos? Goat—"

"Wi'out Horns," finished the other. His voice had again dropped to a whisper, a hoarse and fear-ridden whisper. "Ye know what the Goat is, Mister? 'Tis a 'uman bein', sir. A wee pickaninny or a black mammy or maybe a prime buck out o' the hold. Havin' a throat slit wi' Egbo rites,

Mister. That's what the Goat Wi'out Horns means. Many the time, Mister, layin' in some stinkin' creek by the bacaroons, have I heard the devil drums and seen the fires shinin' through the trees w'en the niggers was offerin' up the Goat. An awful business, Mister, and never a white man allowed to see it, except Old Devil. 'E could take part in it anyw'ere on the coast, and so he did. One time, off old M'Bito's bacaroons, my ship was layin' not two cable lengths from Old Devil's *Oloron*—"

"What? *Oloron?*" exclaimed Mr. Peace.

"Not this *Oloron*," explained the boatswain. "He didn't get this *Oloron* until '52 or '53, I heard tell, and that's years and years after I left the trade. But all Old Devil's ships was called *Oloron*. Aye well, as I was sayin', sir, we was layin' close aboard his *Oloron*, and the next mornin' Old Devil was to begin the passage, and they was two British frigates standin' off the bar waiting for him to come out. That night, Mister, we heard Old Devil makin' luck palaver to 'is *juju*. Kiss the Book on't, sir. We heard the drum throbbin' and we heard the scream o' the poor black-a-more what got the knife. And Mister, before morning a black squall 'ad come swooping out o' the Bight and the frigates had to run for't. And come dawn Old Devil put out wi' never a sail in sight to stop 'im."

"Ugh!" said Mr. Peace.

"Well may you say 'ugh,' young sir," agreed the boatswain. "That's what we all said in the trade w'enever we spoke o' Old Devil. But no man dast say it to 'is face. 'E and Jude had powers, sir, along o' their wickedness. No denying that. Never a cargo sickened and died on him, never a ship o' war overhauled him, never a tornado ever struck him. Now my last voyage in the trade was fair awful, what with Yellow Jack in the hold and among the crew both. Fair awful, sir, wi' so many o' the crew dead and dying we 'ad to bring up slaves to work ship, and they droppin' in their tracks. That voyage finished me in the trade. W'en we dropped anchor in Fever Row in Havana port I went over the side in spite o' the sharks. Landed on the rocks below Moro wi' never a stitch to my name. That's 'ow I left the trade. In '47, that was.

"You might say as 'ow the trade was dead by that time. What wi' the blockades and the fevers and the demand for black ivory fallin' off everyw'ere except in the Brazils, why, I guess no more than half a dozen ships run the middle passage the last year I was in the trade. Afterward it got worse. But Old Devil 'ung on. 'E didn't have to fear what other traders feared.

"I was in Porto Seguro, Mister, in '58, w'en Old Devil come to his finish. In a Baltimore brig, I was, loadin' sugar for New York, and the *Oloron*, this *Oloron*, Mister, come in from landing a cargo on the coast. Don José Valdez, as they called 'im, a grand dago o' the country killed Old Devil.

"I had the rights o' it long afterward from a black dago o' Panama, name o' Jesus, who was shipmates wi' me on a voyage out east. 'E was one o' Don José's bodyguard, this feller Jesus, and saw it all.

"Seems like Don José wasn't no Portagee like the rest o' them in Porto Seguro. 'E was a Spaniard from Maracaibo, and besides being a planter, he was Old Devil's chief agent on the Brazil coast. He had a young wife and a little daughter, and for a time, w'en he was a wee nipper, Boy Lamont stayed ashore wi' Don José to get some schoolin'. That's our skipper, Mister, Luck Lamont, Boy Lamont. Spawn o' Old Devil, and raised in the trade—that's why he's scared o' Jude. Never 'ad no mother as any one knew about. Jude was mother to 'im. My ——!

"Old Devil had some truck wi' Don José's young wife, this feller Jesus tells me. He was a handsome man, was Old Devil, for all 'is wickedness, and 'twas said o' him he need but beckon to a woman and she'd come. But Don José found it out, and this time w'en the *Oloron* come into Porto Seguro, the grand dago was rowed out to meet 'is partner wi' murder in his heart, wi' pistols in his belt, three armed men o' bodyguard to see he didn't 'ave his throat slit afore he could fight, and a priest o' the Church to douse him with holy water in case Jude made devil palaver. That's 'ow it was, says this feller, Jesus.

"Happened on the poop. The poop o' this very ship, Mister.

" 'Ye'll meet me now, Captain Lamont,' says the grand dago, Don José.

" 'I'll meet ye now,' says Old Devil wi' a great laugh, for he was strong in his belief his master would look out for him.

"Meet they did, aft there on the poop, wi' pistols at ten paces. And the devil

went back on 'im, sir. Don José shot him through the heart, shot him dead, sir, wi' Jude and Boy Lamont looking on. Aye, the devil went back on 'im at last. Though that feller, Jesus, was sure it was because Don José had brung a priest o' the Church wi' him, and so the devil couldn't work for his own.

"That was years ago, Mister, nigh on twenty years ago, but they do say as 'ow Old Devil 'angs about this ship, and comes w'en Jude calls. Stands to reason a black soul like that couldn't rest easy. Twice, Mister, I've had fancies I could whiff the old smell in this ship, the old slaver smell, sir, what I ain't smelled or even thought about this score and more o' years. Both times I've smelled the smell was just after I heard the throbbin' o' the devil drum, aft there in the cabin. Stands to reason, says I, 'twas Old Devil hoverin' around. Wouldn't the black soul o' him carry the stink o' the slaver holds about wi' it?

"Then w'en I hear Jude callin', with my own ears, Mister, aft there this mornin', callin' on Old Devil to get you, Mister, and get her, Don José's daughter—"

"What's that?" cried Mr. Peace. "You said his daughter, Bos?"

"Aye, sir, daughter o' that grand dago, no less," averred the boatswain. "For'ard, 'ere, some says as 'ow she's just a tart o' the Barbary Coast, what the skipper has took up with. But I knows better, sir. Didn't I hand her gear into the cabin the other mornin' w'en she come aboard, and didn't I hear her wi' my own ears tellin' old Jude who she was, and layin' down the law to 'im? Tellin' him in Spanish, which lingo I knowed well in the old days. Holding the little gold cross in her hand and cursin' him out for the bloody witch 'e is, and Luck Lamont—Boy Lamont that was—standin' by her side, wi' fear o' hell in his face. Don José's daughter, child o' the man what finished Old Devil, that's who she is.

" 'Wicked old man, d'ye remember José Valdez, d'ye remember the day o' your master's death?' says she, or words to that effect, Mister. 'D'ye remember 'ow the good God and the Blessed Saints supported the arm o' Valdez? Black servant o' hell,' says she, 'I am the child o' Valdez, and betwixt me and my 'usband and your powers o' darkness I hold the Cross!' And wi' that, Mister, she shoved the little gold cross under Jude's nose, and 'im standing there wi'out a word, just looking at her, sir, wi' his shiny black eyes, like a snake what's going to strike, and Captain Lamont standing by wi' the fear o' hell in his face. I heard that, Mister, I seen that, and this mornin' Jude was calling on Old Devil to come and get her and you. You, Mister! D'ye know, sir, why 'e's got a down on you?"

"No, do you?" said Mr. Peace.

"I can guess," replied the boatswain. "So can all 'ands for'ard. They all been talkin' about it and saying as 'ow Jude would have a down on you. Because o' the way you stood up against him w'en he come on deck the other night and afterward 'ow you got the fores'l in and 'ow you been scoffin' at this dirt that's on us and makin' light o' the leak. Jude brung all this dirt down on us, Mister, for to show the Old Man, and Lord knows he scared 'im and the mate, too, while as for the hands, there ain't a man for'ard don't shake in 'is boots at thought o' the nigger. Only you, sir, and her. So 'e's calling on Old Devil to get you both."

MR. PEACE waited an instant to make sure of himself, and when he opened his mouth his careless laugh had not a tremor in it—pure scornful mirth.

"A dashed fine yarn, Bos," exclaimed he. "Seems I'm in a fix betwixt the devil and the deep sea, so to speak. What d'ye think I ought to do about it?"

"Do?" muttered the boatswain." 'Do,' says you. Well—"

Mr. Peace was suddenly aware that the old man had his sheath knife in his hand and was gently caressing the edge of the wicked blade with his calloused thumb. It was a most significant gesture. Words were quite unnecessary.

"Why you bloodthirsty old pirate!" cried Mr. Peace. "D'ye mean to hint, Bos—"

The old man turned his back and, with an ostentatious flourish, cut the length of rope for which the second mate had expressed his desire. But while he did so, his voice rumbled distinctly enough to reach the other's ear.

"I'm thinking most o' her, poor lass."

"Look here, Bos," demanded Mr. Peace, sharply, "have you been spinning this yarn to the focsle?"

"That I have not, sir," was the offended reply. "I'm no sea lawyer, Mister. I

minds my business and 'olds my tongue, and I wouldn't ha' said a word to you only for what I heard and on account o' her, sir. "E's in the same boat with her,' says I to myself. "E's a bright young feller, and has 'is nerve with him,' says I, 'and maybe he'll think o' something that'll save him and her, too.' That's why I been talking to you. But don't think, Mister, as 'ow I'd gab about Jude to anybody, just for the sake o' gabbin'. I don't want no Egbo witch to get a down on me."

"Be sure you don't gab," advised the young man. "There are more than enough crazy notions loose in this hooker already. And put out of your mind that business you just hinted at, Bos. You're not in the Guinea trade now, you know. There's such a thing as hanging, Bos."

"I didn't hint at nothin'," said the other sullenly. "All I done was give you warning. If you won't take 'eed, that's your lookout."

"Oh, I'll take heed, right enough, thank you," assured Mr. Peace. "Don't you worry, Bos, I'll see that everything comes out all right."

The old man stared at Mr. Peace, then he stared at his knife, which was still in his palm. He slowly returned the knife to its sheath, on his hip.

"Aye, aye, sir," said he. "O' course, you will, sir. And might I make so bold to ask as just 'ow you'll 'andle the black-amore?"

"Just as I told you. Laugh at him," answered Mr. Peace. "That's the thing to do in a case like this, Bos—laugh. Just laugh, that's all. I haven't got the old-fashioned notions about these things, Bos. Believing in *juju* rot was all right in the old days, y'see, m'lad, when men didn't know any better. But now-a-days an up to date man laughs at such notions. Why, Bos, this gale you are so fussed about, it's just a seasonal blow that I smelled before ever we left port. And this leak we have is no more than we might expect in an old ship, as well you should know. There's lots of ships not half so good as this one that would get a leak after a wracking blow like this. Your Old Devil, bosh, Bos, bosh! When a man's dead, he's dead. As for the old nigger, why, he's just a half crazed, doddering old loon, with one foot in the grave. He couldn't harm a fly, Bos. The thing to do is laugh."

XI

LYING in his bunk that night, reflecting upon the affairs of the ship, the second mate didn't feel nearly as much like laughing as he had pretended to the boatswain. His thoughts, in fact, were gloomy and foreboding of evil. Some of the dread that drenched the ship had seeped through his armor of reason. He felt that something bad was going to happen.

Not that Mr. Peace was converted to a belief in Jude's witchcraft. All nonsense, he sturdily vowed. Nevertheless, the ship lay under a web of nameless, menacing evil, and whichever way he looked he saw the steward, like a black spider, in the center of that web. "Something," said Mr. Peace, "is —— wrong in all this."

His skepticism, indeed, was an ingrained quality rather than the fruit of reason. It was his heritage from practical minded Yankees who demanded to be shown generations before Missouri was even thought of. What exasperated him most in the present instance was the fact that he could feel things he couldn't see. What a ship!

"Madhouse!" he muttered for the hundredth time.

From the very first he had scoffed at the general belief that Jude had brought on the gale, because here was something that he could see. He knew something about winds. Also, on his very first voyage to sea, from his twelfth to his fifteenth year, Mr. Peace had been cabin boy in the ship *Charity White* of Boston, and old Enos Whitmark, master of this vessel, had been able to call the weather hours ahead of the glass. Captain Whitmark "felt it in his bones," being troubled with arthritic joints, and his walk was just such an exaggerated shuffle as Jude's. Hence, Mr. Peace deducted that Jude could very likely feel weather "in his bones."

But now that he knew something of Jude's history, he was unable to dismiss the fellow with the word "humbug." He could tell the boatswain easily enough that it was all rot, but in the privacy of his own mind there was doubt. Not that he believed in witchcraft. Oh, no. But, there were things—

If the second mate were a skeptical Yankee, he was also a sailor, ship-bred since boyhood and nurtured on marvels. He knew very well that strange things came out

of wild Africa with the slaves. The middle passage was then less than a generation abandoned, and there were many men still at sea who had sailed it. Their yarns were current in the forecastles and cabins of every ship. "Egbo," Mr. Peace knew, was a dreaded word to the old Guineamen, being the name of some secret jungle cult which was said to possess powers over life and death. Dark, dreadful powers, never spoken of outright, merely hinted at. If Jude were a witch of Egbo, as the boatswain said, he would possess these mysterious, malign powers Mr. Peace had so often heard mentioned, but never heard described.

Whatever powers Jude had, Mr. Peace was certain of one power Jude had not. An all but forgotten Methodism, legacy from a devout mother, was parent of this particular conviction—when a man died he went to heaven or hell, and that was the end of it. Jude could no more call his Old Devil out of the grave and over the years than he could fly. That was that, said Mr. Peace.

Perhaps Jude's other powers were of a pattern; perhaps Jude was all fraud. But the trouble of it was, thought Mr. Peace, everybody in the ship except himself believed in the whole rigamarole, weather-making, spirit-raising and everything else that an excited and fearsome mind could imagine. He knew now what Captain Lamont and Mr. Bowcher had meant when they cried, "He's come!" They believed the steward could call up Old Devil. They were afraid. Fear, that was what was the matter with the ship. Perhaps, thought Mr. Peace, this Egbo sorcery that was so famous was at bottom just fear.

He wished with all his heart he could honestly convince himself that he felt no fear. But though he might convince the boatswain, he couldn't draw the wool over his own eyes. He did feel fear, thrills of fear, waves of fear. Fear was in the air, he breathed it in. Fear of he knew not what.

"Enough to make a man swear," said he, and swear he did, most ably, but it made him feel no better.

The evil, the danger, menaced him, and her. Ah, her! No matter where he started, the harassed young man's thoughts sooner or later arrived at her. She was in danger, had said the boatswain, had said the mate, had said Jude, himself, with malevolent voice and gesture.

"She is in danger," echoed his heart.

The fact that the same peril menaced them both was to Mr. Peace a source of positive, if somewhat distressed, satisfaction. The thought thrilled him; he couldn't keep it out of his mind. Their fates were entwined. Wasn't Jude's hostility to both of them a proof that they were in some subtle way united? He, with his powers, whatever they were, must sense the existence of the bond between the second mate and the lady. That was why he made palaver, as the boatswain called it, against them both.

La Carmencita! Ah, the soft magic had returned to the dear name! The grand passion was off the rocks and, tight and sound, was bowling along before fair winds.

Mr. Peace had not clapped eyes upon the woman in the flesh since she came on board. Since the other morning he had not heard her voice. All the same, she had been his companion these three days past. The vision that had so entranced and astonished him the other morning had returned again and again. The troubled, pallid face visited his heaving pillow during his short, stormy-weather naps, and marched the wind and spray swept decks with him during his lonely duty hours. He had again lifted his head among the stars and communed with the flaming spirit of the tornado.

It was indeed a bond of the spirit that united them. No need of words, no need of handclasps and such-like truck. What did the books call it? "Souls attuned," that was it. Why, reflected Mr. Peace, it was all fashioning after the very best patterns. Romance and chivalry, that was it; just like they wrote about in the very best yarns. The captain's bride—aye, but Lamont—Mr. Peace was willing to bet his payday on it—had no knowledge of the spirit of the Spanish Tornado. Let the skipper have his woman, Mr. Peace told himself. He didn't care about that. He had the part of her that really mattered; he had the soul of her to worship.

Was it not to Charley Peace she was turning in her hour of need? Mr. Peace was sure it was her hour of need. Else why the wordless message in the glowing eyes? What else could it be but a plea for succor.

"If I catch that coon so much as looking cock-eyed at her, I'll twist him into two half hitches," vowed Mr. Peace as he closed his eyes.

XII

HE AWAKENED and lay rigid, listening. Something was wrong. His heart was thumping furiously, and his tongue felt thick and woody. He felt as if a pressure had just been lifted from his chest, from his throat, a pressure that had been shutting off his wind. There had been a noise, a strange noise that awakened him.

He listened. He heard the deep roar of the wind aloft, and the creaking and groaning of the ship's timbers. His oilskins swished and scuffed against the wall as the ship pitched and rolled. He heard the dull thud of striking seas. The steady, dispiriting *clank-clank* of the pumps penetrated faintly to the room. The mate's heavy footfall passed overhead; the mate's but not the captain's. He wondered if the captain had at last had sense enough to break his vigil with a nap. Outside in the cabin six bells tinkled; the three double strokes were repeated overhead on the poop, and an instant later repeated again by the heavy-toned ship's bell forward. He even heard the lookout's hail, faint and thin, "Light'sbright, aw'swell!" and the mate's answering bellow, "All right!"

But he was sure it wasn't all right or all well. He felt that something was all wrong. What noise had awakened him? He had heard something, that was certain. These noises he heard now were all accustomed sounds, ordinary ship noises; they would not awaken a tired sailor a full hour before his time. But some strange noise had awakened him. And something had pressed on his wind. Something!

At the thought, Mr. Peace's hair stood up on his head and Mr. Peace, himself, sat up in his bunk. Something! He peered suspiciously about his tiny room. The lamp, turned low, was swaying in its gimbals against the movements of the ship; it sent little patches of shadow chasing over the ceiling and walls. The light was so dim it revealed nothing. But it suggested everything.

Mr. Peace caught himself sniffing. There was a smell in the air, very faint and very strange. A noxious taint like spoiled meat. Like a whiff of carrion. A smell that somehow suggested things dark and evil; it sent little shivers of alarm up and down his spine.

In all his two and twenty years, Mr. Peace had never smelled a slave vessel. Yet he promptly named this vagrant odor to himself.

"The slaver smell!" said he. "He's come he's here!" he added. Then immediately added to that, "Oh, come now, you idiot, that's rot!"

Then, abruptly, a noise reached his ears, an unusual noise that he recognized instantly as the sound that had aroused him. It was the squawk of a fowl. Beyond the door, somewhere in the cabin a chicken was clamoring in anger and despair.

Squawk, squawk, squawk!

"What the deuce?" audibly wondered Mr. Peace. "Has Chang been for'ard to the chicken coop this time of night?"

Mr. Peace might have investigated no further; a meal for the skipper or a broth for the skipper's wife being prepared aft because of the weather was his first conclusion. But close upon the sound of the squawking came the sound of a voice, her voice. It smashed its way through wood and space to his ears, heavy, vibrant, terror-filled and beseeching:

"No, no, no!" It was an ascending scale. "You mus' not! No, no!"

One bound took Mr. Peace from his bed to his door. He had turned in standing on account of the weather, merely removing his boots before lying down. Now he ignored footwear, and was out of his room and in the alleyway between his room and the dining saloon ere the voice had finished.

His stockinged feet made his entrance into the after cabin quite noiseless. The captain and his wife, standing by the long chart table in the center of the room, were unaware of his coming, and for quite a long moment Mr. Peace stood in the shadow of the companion stairs gaping amazedly at them and at the table.

The hanging lamp burned high, and cast a golden pool of light upon a circular area of which the table was the center. It was a circle of light that slid to and fro and fore and aft ceaselessly as the ship rolled and pitched, but it never left one certain spot on the table in shadow, it never dimmed the radiance that bathed the object that occupied this certain spot.

It was an object the very sight of which struck Mr. Peace with a sickish sort of dread. It was a lump of black wood, some

two feet high and half as broad, and in outline it was very roughly shaped into the semblance of a human head and bust. At first Mr. Peace thought the shape was due to savage handicraft, but later he discovered it was a natural sculpture, a piece of black root that had grown into this fantastic shape.

But at the moment it was not the thing's nature but its appearance that impressed and horrified him. It was a hideous, brutish caricature of a face, a bulging brow, a knob of a nose, and a gash of mouth above a distorted, uneven chin. White teeth gleamed in the smirking mouth and red lights glowered from the holes that passed for eyes, bits of glass, Mr. Peace afterwards discovered. The obscene thing stank; its evil reek pervaded the cabin. It was the smell that had frightened Mr. Peace in his bunk, the reek of carrion. The thing actually seemed alive at first glance. A series of expressions, all hateful and malignant, writhed across the blunt travesty of a face in endless procession. It took some time for Mr. Peace to realize this seeming life was but the continuous movement of the lamp light.

A trussed fowl was lying at the foot of this image, and beside it lay a formidable, heavy-looking dagger with a bone handle. The bird—it was the cock who ruled the roost forward—was still alive and clucking sadly. But he was to die. Mr. Peace gathered that instantly. No mistaking this scene; it was a sacrifice. A ceremony was in progress or about to begin. Dark, unholy rites centering about that black, ugly snout on the table.

Mr. Peace knew what the thing was. One glance was enough to identify it, with the boatswain's bated whisper not yet stale in his ears. The thing on the table was the *juju*, the Egbo *juju*. Jude's god, Old Devil's god, aye, and the skipper's accustomed god, too. But the captain didn't look as if he loved his god. No happy business this.

Captain Lamont was standing in front of the grotesque lump of wood in the very attitude of black despondency. His lanky body was encased in the oilskins in which he paraded the decks, and the chill air of outdoors was still departing from him in little wisps of vapor. He had removed his southwester, and his long hair clung in matted patches to his forehead and cheeks. Haggard and gray of face, his body slumped dejectedly, he stood staring at the idol and the fowl and the heavy knife.

Behind him stood his wife, and a little to one side so her eyes too could fasten upon the table. She of the dreams and visions, she of the thrilling voice and glowing eyes. Arsonist of hearts! Not even the strange and, he felt, deadly object on the table could long hold Mr. Peace's gaze from her.

HE FELT a painful congestion in his throat as he regarded her, so strongly did his sympathies well upward. Ah, here was a queen of tragedy, if ever was one, a picture of beauty in distress and despair. Mr. Peace was more thrilled than when he watched her dancing her wild dance in costume on the Bella Union stage. This was not acting; this was real. La Carmencita, the Spanish Tornado, with her soul on the surface of her features for him to observe and, oh, it was a tortured and pleading soul, desolated by a tornado of despair. The fact that she was Mrs. Lamont and obviously troubled about her husband didn't bother Mr. Peace. He didn't even think of it. He only thought that here was he, Charley M. Peace, young prince of romance, come to her call to lend a hand. Succor, they called it in the books. Aye, so he would!

Yet a diffidence accompanied this surge of valorous emotion. Mr. Peace felt himself blushing; he also felt ashamed, as if he were a Peeping Tom. For the lady was barefooted and in her night robe. True, a flowered dressing sack was thrown about her shoulders, but it gaped in front, and the thin cambric of the under garment was ill concealment of the form within. Carmencita's hair was unbound and fell to her waist and below, a rippling cloak of raven black. Her shoulders were cream, but her face was blanched a deathly white. She stood in most attractive and indecorous disarray, most disturbing to the pulse beats of a young man who had hitherto visioned her as naught but spirit—until his bashful eyes reached her face, when he saw and thought no more of her body. It was a stricken and horrified face.

Clutched to her bosom was a string of jet rosary beads, and the little golden cross of the pendant peeped above one white clenched fist. Her lips were moving

silently and rapidly. Praying, thought Mr. Peace. Praying, he reasoned, against that thing on the table at which she was staring.

The thin cackle of Jude's laughter suddenly pervaded the air of the after cabin. A shrill sound, yet light, and mingling as it did with the horrid taint in the air, it seemed to issue from the idol on the table. For Jude was not visible to Mr. Peace, although it was instantly made evident that Mr. Peace was visible to Jude.

"He-he-he! Yo see him, Boy? Dat Mis'ar Peace? Him come to de sackerfis. Good, dat berry good! Ol' Debbil call him out, Ol' Debbil call her out foh to see yo gib de blood. De Cross an' de Peace! Yah, he-he-he! Dat rich, Boy, dat berry rich!"

The hissing of the aged voice had not ceased ere the second mate was discovered by the pair near the table. The captain turned to him with an expression of anger, but her face, as she spied him, lighted most marvelously. A light of welcome, he knew.

He stepped forward. He meant to address the captain, of course, but he was quite unable to lift his gaze from Carmencita's glowing face.

"I heard a—a noise," he explained, "a voice—like trouble—and so—"

"You come!" finished she. "To me! Oh, *Sanctissima Madre!* Pedro, Pedro, he come to me!"

She whirled upon her husband, and her voice grew to a shout, a throaty, triumphant shout.

"You hear? You see? Pedro—it ees a sign, Pedro! Do you not see? I make me a pray for a sign for you, Pedro! And the good God send me the Meester Peese. Your luck boy, Pedro! Oh, it ees a sign from heaven, a sign for you, Pedro, that you mus' not, you mus' not do that t'ing. Ah, now you beleef, Pedro! *Oh, Ave Maria, oh, Madre de Dios.*"

The vibrant voice launched into ecstatic Spanish, a prayer of praise and thanks.

The captain's long fingers closed nervously upon Mr. Peace's arm, and the clutch at last forced his amazed and worshipful gaze away from the woman's face. He found himself eyeing a very different face, indeed. Captain Lamont's ordinary sallowness had faded to a sickly gray, and never had Mr. Peace beheld countenance more harassed and distrait. The man's eyes were actually wild. Wild, too, were his words.

"Are you sent, Mister? Are you sent?"

"Sent?" echoed Mr. Peace, blankly.

"Sent by God—er—ah—by her God," said the captain.

"Your God, too, Pedro," cried the woman. "Your God. You mus' say, 'He ees my God!' Say, Pedro, say!"

The captain groaned. It was like a cry of pain wrenched from him against his will. Mingled with it was that thin, demoniacal laughter—Jude's voice, of course—yet the mocking chuckle came from the abomination on the table. The captain was trembling, and his fingers communicated the contagion to the younger man. Despite himself, Mr. Peace began to tremble too.

"I can't say that. I dare not," Lamont said to his wife. "I—ah—our lives—your life—the ship—er—"

His voice trailed away into another wordless groan.

"But the sign! He ees a sign!"

The grasp on Mr. Peace's arm tightened, the captain's feverish eyes inspected afresh Mr. Peace's rather dazed countenance. It was as if he were looking for the sign in the young man's face. Indeed, a sign was what he demanded.

"Are you a sign?" he cried. "Show me a sign—ah—show me, sir!"

In his eagerness he actually shook Mr. Peace.

The latter floundered and stuttered.

"Why," said he. "Why—why—what?" A sign of what, in heaven's name? But if she wanted him to be a sign, then a sign he was.

"Yes, sir, I guess so," he told the captain.

"How do you know?" demanded the captain. "Show me the sign, sir. Show me!"

"He eemself, ees the sign," said Carmencita.

"Ah, if I could think that," muttered the captain. "But I must be sure. I—ah—tell me, Mister, how do you come to be here?"

The query was Mr. Peace's undoing and hers. He could think of no other answer than the truth.

"A noise," he said. "Something awakened me." Involuntarily he put a hand to his throat. "Something," he said vaguely. "And a smell. And than I heard—"

"Ah, I feared so," said the captain. He released his grip on Mr. Peace's arm, and

turned to his wife. His hands made a gesture of despairing surrender. "You see," he said to her. "It wasn't—ah—your God. They—they called him."

"Ye-he, he-he! Dat's so, Boy, dat's right!" Jude's voice rang out in a sudden shrill screech. "Ol' Debbil call him. Ol' Debbil call her. Heah de call, smell de smell, come to de sackerfis. Black One awaitin', Boy, awaitin' an' awaitin'. Ol' Debbil say him want de Goat, de white, white Goat. Yo gib de cock, Boy. Yo hurry wid de sackerfis or Black One no take de cock. Spill de blood! Gib de drink! Ee-yah-yah-yah!"

The shrill voice launched into jumping, rhythmic chant in native gibberish. Accompanying the voice was a soft, growling humming sound. The voice of the drum, Mr. Peace knew. The devil drum.

THE sinister chant seemed to carry a message to the captain. Mr. Peace saw that he was listening intently, saw the lines deepen about his mouth and a sort of film appear and dim the feverish brilliance of his eyes. He was like a man losing himself in a trance.

Even Carmencita was for the moment dumb. She, too, stood quiet, listening to the savage, thumping sounds of the song and staring with round, horrified eyes at her husband's changing features.

Mr. Peace's gaze probed the gloomy after-end of the cabin for sight of the author of the hypnotic din. At first he missed Jude, for he looked on level with his own face; but when he lowered his gaze he spied the negro squatting on the floor just beyond the edge of the circle of lamp light. He saw his gleaming eyeballs first and then the huddled lump of his body. The ship climbed the slope of an unusually large sea, and the light slid aft and, for a moment, held Jude within its circle.

Not the least shock Mr. Peace sustained that night was this first clear sight of Jude. It was not the white clad steward he saw. Jude was changed, Jude was himself. His spidery, wizened body was nude, save for a strip of leopard skin draped over one shoulder. His black skin glistened in the light as if it had been smeared with oil. He squatted on his hams, his small, simian face chinned on his knees, as it had been the other morning when he huddled on the divan, and his skinny arms, reaching out to grasp the drum, were like two bent, black twigs.

No child's dream of a witch could have revealed a more unhuman and sinister looking creature. Jude in his white clothes did not look very formidable. He was just a vicious old man with a soul filled with spiteful malice. But this naked savage on the floor was different; he was like the other Jude multiplied a hundredfold. To Mr. Peace's excited and fascinated gaze he seemed something less, and more than human. He was like a blot of black sin on the cabin floor. The uncouth chant the thick lips slobbered impregnated the very air with menacing evil. A fear stirred deep down inside Mr. Peace, a fear that squeezed his bowels and started a cold sweat all over his body. He almost imagined he could see things in the gloom behind this jungle Jude—dim outlines of trees, the shine of black water, dark, moving shapes.

"Ee, yah, yah! Hoi, yah, yah!"

The measure of the chant was slowly quickening. The throb of the drum was faster, louder, yet not so loud it eclipsed the voice. It sounded, thought Mr. Peace, like the purring of a great cat.

Mr. Peace stared curiously at the drum. It looked such an inadequate megaphone for the voice of a deity, even a minor devil. It was a small hollow cylinder of black wood, black like the image, like Jude, and knotty and knobby. It was slightly cone-shaped, and the larger end was capped with a taut skin which Jude was gently rubbing as he sang.

A crude, silly looking instrument in broad daylight, perhaps, but at this moment, in this place, it appeared to Mr. Peace to be nearly as fearsome as Jude, himself. It was like a lethal weapon in Jude's hands. And the breathing grumbles, the diabolical purrings, that Jude was coaxing from it had in them a quality most unnerving and fear inspiring. Mr. Peace found his pulses leaping, his whole body quivering, in response to the savage thrum.

A movement of the captain wrenched his eyes away from Jude. The captain was quivering, too. Indeed, his whole body was shaking violently and convulsively in time to the chant, and so wild was the expression on his face all sanity, almost all humanness seemed to have fled him. Yet an atom of reason remained, for he was trying to talk to his wife.

"You see—they—they—" He doubled over and clutched his side, as though suddenly stabbed with pain. There was sweat on his brow. "They — ah — prod!" he gasped. "I must hurry."

He turned toward the table.

"No, no, you mus' not, you can not!" She was at his side, clawing at his oilskins, passionately protesting. "You promise, Pedro, you promise you never do heem no more! You promise me! You promise God!"

"God!" cried the captain. "You say God!"

He lifted his long arms to the ceiling. He shook his clenched fists and blasphemed horribly and followed the oaths with terrible, jeering laughter. Jude's shrill voice mingled with his, ever more insistent grew the wild throb of the drum. It was a perfect bedlam of noise, and Mr. Peace could do nothing but tremble and gape at the two figures before him.

"I am not Your's!" the captain shouted to the ceiling. "I belong to—"

"*Ee, yah, yah! Hoi, yah, yah!*" Jude's wild cry ascended to a screech. "Gib de blood! Gib de blood! *Ee, yah! Hoi, yah!*"

"*Ee, yah! Hoi, yah!*" echoed the captain.

He was holding the bird by its legs high in the air, out of reach of the wildly clawing hands of the woman. He picked up the knife and held it poised. The cock's squirming head was over the *juju*. But he did not slash at the feathered throat. Instead he threw back his head and joined in the wild chant, mouthing the native phrases and yelps like Jude, himself.

Faster and louder sounded the drum. It swelled to a bass roar, and the wild voices swelled with it. More and more violent became the spasms that shook the captain's body. It seemed almost he would be wrenched apart. Carmencita was wildly striking at him with her fists.

And Mr. Peace could do nothing. With all his soul he wanted to help her. But he was unable to move or lift a hand. His own body was shaking violently in time to the drum. He was sick. He wanted to vomit. This sight of man gone beast was horrible. This din was horrible. This fear that paralyzed him was most horrible of all. It was a shattering, terrible fear. It welled up from some unsuspected deep beneath his very soul and quite possessed him. He had never known such a fear.

It was more than a fear, it was also a memory. Not with his mind was he remembering; it was the flesh and blood and harrowed soul of him that interpreted the moment. This was not the first time, they told him. He had been through this before. Somewhere, sometime, in some dark place the drums, the chanting voices, the reek of death, the brooding Black One. Long ago. Long, long ago.

"Gib de blood! Gib de drink!"

Jude was interjecting commands in English into his native caterwauling. He was changing position, Mr. Peace observed. Not arising and walking, but squirming across the floor in his huddled attitude, and in his progress losing not an accent or throb of the chant. He moved to a position on the other side of the table, where he was facing the captain. The effect was instant, and the motive of the change almost as soon apparent. The negro's eyes, like two shining black marbles with white rims, fastened a basilisk glare upon the face of the frothing man before the image. Lamont's convulsions lessened at once, and the hand that held the knife commenced little circular sweepings of the air.

"Gib de blood! De red blood!" chanted Jude. The drum seemed to screech the words after him. For the voice of the drum was suddenly changed. No more a deep purring came from it; it emitted harsh, imperative screeches, and each shuddering explosion of sound was like a continuation and approval of the black's shrill commands.

"De blood, de red blood! De white skin, de red blood! Not de cock, Boy! Ol' Debbil say de cock doan' do. De Goat, Boy, de Goat! Ol' Debbil say de Black One hab de Goat. Open de hand, Boy, drop de cock. Black One hab de Goat!"

So ran Jude's counsel, interspersed with the shrill yelps of the jungle hymn which he still continued. The horror-frozen young second mate saw the captain's hand obediently open and the fowl drop upon the table.

"Cotch de Goat, Boy, de white Goat!" ranted Jude. "Ol' Wind blow de ship down, ol' Sea fill de ship up, 'f de Black One doan' drink. Gib de blood foh fair weddah, fair wind. *Ee, yah, yah, yah!* Gib de Goat, de Goat, de Goat! Like ol' time, Boy. De Goat, Boy, de white, soft Goat. De mammy Goat! Cotch de white throat, Boy, cotch it!"

THE hand that had held the fowl was groping blindly in the air. Suddenly, as if it were seized and directed by some invisible force, it was withdrawn to the possessed man's breast and shot out again at a new angle, to fasten a lethal clutch upon Carmencita's white throat. She did not struggle. She seemed as overcome and nerveless as Mr. Peace, himself. The clutching hand whirled her about and began to force her backward over the table. As her head went back and down, Mr. Peace saw the little gold cross held in a clenched fist before her face.

It was like a horrible dream wherein one must move to avert catastrophe, yet can not. It was a matter of moments, of seconds, but to the spellbound second mate each second was age-long. Something was swelling inside him, and when it burst he knew it would shatter him to pieces. The cry of protest and horror that was choked in his throat seemed like a ball of living flame. If he could only control his trembling! If only that cursed drum would cease for an instant!

But the drum continued. More, it rose into view, beyond the farther rim of the table, with Jude's face hanging above it like a black death's head. And now Jude was also leaning far over the table, screeching into the captain's face.

"Ol' Debbil say gib! Heah Ol' Debbil! De Goat go down to de sackerfis! Down she go, Boy, down!"

Down she went, her limber dancer's back pressed flat upon the table by the pressure of her husband's hand. Lamont's other hand which held the knife lifted high and poised for the blow.

It was this instant that the thing which had been swelling inside Mr. Peace exploded. It didn't blow him to pieces, but it did blow the strangled cry up out of his burning throat. It did more than that. It shattered the spell which held him inactive. It was like a key turning somewhere in his mind to release him from the terrible prison of quaking flesh in which he was confined. It seemed instantaneous, the internal explosion, his cry and Jude's cry of "Gib it!" and himself lurching forward with outflung arms just as the knife began its downward plunge.

At the moment the ship was rolling down to port, and just as he leaped, the deck heeled sharply. In its effect upon the moving body that heeling was like the snap of a giant springboard. Mr. Peace was hurled down upon the table with twice the speed and force his own legs could have given him.

His outstretched arm missed the captain's knife wrist, but his shoulder caught the man in the back, sprawling him far forward and causing the knife thrust to overreach by half the width of the table the white breast of the intended victim. Of this lucky misstroke Mr. Peace had no immediate knowledge. Plunging across the table himself, when his body came into contact with its edge, his temple struck with terrific force against the iron-like wood of the *juju*. The Black One went flying. Mr. Peace, with his face pressed upon the very spot just forcibly vacated, beheld before his eyes a swimming of lights and colors more vivid than the aurora itself.

Stunned and well nigh breathless, the idea of succor still animated his limbs. Even as he lay sprawled over the table his fingers clawed at the captain's clothes and when, presently, he hoisted himself on somewhat tottering legs, his clutch dragged the captain upright, too. But not to remain on his feet. Lamont hung as limp as a dead man, and when Mr. Peace let go him he dropped in a crumpled heap on the floor. Not that Mr. Peace cared or even observed. At the instant the second mate was already bending over the other form stretched over the table.

She was awake and very much alive. Expecting the worst, it was a real shock to Mr. Peace to discern at once she was neither daggered nor choked to death. Not even unconscious, not even hysterical. It was the second mate, himself, who was on the verge of hysteria. Carmencita's black eyes met his glance with a look of serene inquiry. The little gold cross was pressed against her lips. But as Mr. Peace's arms lifted her erect, she moved her hand and said in a low, but quite unshaken voice—

"It ees feenished?"

The immense relief at discovering her unharmed, the feel of her soft body in his arms, the warm, sweet scent of her was all too much for Mr. Peace's addled wits. The ringing inside his head, induced by the collison with the image, increased rather than subsided. There were red blotches on her soft white throat where her husband's fingers had gripped. Her under-robe was torn at the neck, and through the wide rent

gleamed the creamy, curving bosom. Unconsciously, he pressed her to him, unconsciously he babbled into her face:

"I saved you! Oh, I saved you!"

There seized him with compelling force the conviction that this was the great moment, this was the answer to the dreams and visions, for just this had fate sent him to the Bella Union, and to the *Oloron*. Destiny. Souls entwined. Like in the books. Why, he was born for just this!

All this in the brief moment while he lifted her from the table. All this, while the smoke of the battle, so to speak, still fogged the air. Her saviour! Her knight! She was erect now, face to face with him, breast to breast with him. Her soft lips were just a finger's length from his, pouting, coaxing, drawing down his head.

"Ah, Carmen-cita!" breathed Mr. Peace. "My heart, my love—"

"My ——!"

It was Carmencita's yelp of dismay and her sliding through his arms like a greased eel that brought Mr. Peace's moment of divine passion to its exclamatory close.

Afterward Mr. Peace wondered somewhat bitterly if destiny willed him to set down Carmencita's bare feet squarely upon the unconscious form of her husband. Very likely. Destiny, he was beginning to believe, was just such a joker. One instant she was in his arms, just he and she on top of the universe. The next instant she was on her knees at his feet, crying, "Pedro! Pedro!", and turning over on its back the body of Captain Lamont.

The shock of disillusionment shook the young man's straying wits back into the moment and the place. Mr. Peace was suddenly aware that Carmencita's voice, showering Spanish endearments upon Pedro, was almost the only sound in the cabin. That pandemonium of a moment gone was silenced. Jude was silent. The drum was silent. Even the hoarse voice of the gale overhead seemed diminished in volume. It was an eery quiet, now he was conscious of it. Something had gone out of the air.

"He ees not dead!" came Carmencita's voice from the floor. "Ah, it ees well. The good God 'ave 'eem in sleep."

Mr. Peace bent over and looked into the captain's face, which was pillowed against her bosom. No, he was not dead, that was certain. Color, even, had come back into his cheeks. He was breathing heavily, like a man in a drunken sleep, even snoring a little bit.

"He 'ave told me of thees sleep," said Carmencita. "After the feet, 'e 'ave the sleep, then he awake refresh'. Ah, *Dios*."

She hugged the unconsious head, and broke afresh into prayers of thanks.

Mr. Peace regarded her with a great wonder.

"But he—he just tried to kill you, ma'am!" he expostulated. "Why, he tried to—"

"Pedro keel me?" she interrupted. "No, no, señor, you not onderstan'. The good God use you, but you not onderstan'. You say you 'ave save me. No, no, senor, it ees God who 'ave save 'eem, Pedro!"

This was much too deep for Mr. Peace at the moment. His mind was trying to accept the evidence of his eyes.

"You hug him when he just tried to stab—"

"What I care he keel me!" exclaimed Carmencita. "You not onderstan' God, Meester Peese. He, my Pedro, take me out of the hell back there. Now I make me prays and the good God takes 'eem out of 'ees hell here. It ees so. No more the evil ones can come to heem. The Evil, the neegar, God make feenish! Look, senor!"

Mr. Peace looked, as she indicated, under the table to the other side of the cabin.

"Jude!" he exclaimed, softly. "That's Jude! He's—good heavens!"

He got up and went around to the other side of the table, to see more closely. There could be no doubt about it. Jude was dead. Dead as ever man could be. Dead as a door nail. No mistaking the aspect of that sprawled, still figure on the floor at his feet.

Mr. Peace's calling had made him not unacquainted with death in sudden and violent form. It was not the fact that Jude was dead at his feet that made him shudder, that made his knees bend beneath his weight, that sent a wave of mingled awe and fear sweeping through his entire being. Jude was dead. That was good. But the manner of his death.

"My ——!" said Mr. Peace weakly. "Oh, my ——!"

The bone handle of the sacrificial knife protruded beyond Jude's skinny shoulder. When Mr. Peace bent over, he saw that the

blade was thrust all its length into the base of Jude's neck, thrust downward, deep into his chest. So forceful had been that overreaching thrust even the guard of the knife was pressed into the flesh.

Jude had fallen face downward upon the wooden *juju*. He had died upon his god. The Black One lay beneath the wound and the red life that had spouted from Jude had bathed its brutish features.

"It drinks!" cried Mr. Peace with an hysterical squeak in his voice. "The Black One—"

"It ees feenish, that Black," came Carmencita's voice. "You come, pleese, señor? Pedro, we mus' put een hees bed. Ah, *mio carrisimo*, Pedro!"

Glancing under the table, Mr. Peace saw her passionately kissing the sallow face she held in her arms.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Peace, and this time it was surprize that cracked his voice. "Ma'am!" he called out. "Jude's dead!"

"I know," was the quiet answer. "The Evil Ones are all dead. No more they come back. God answer my prays. He grab Pedro's arm. He make heem keel that neegar."

"Why, it was me bumping—" began Mr. Peace as he crawled under the table toward her.

But he didn't finish the sentence. That curious expression in Carmencita's face as she looked down at her husband stopped him. It also drew from him the greatest oath he knew.

"Women!" he said. "Well, I'll be eternally hornswoggled!"

XIII

IT MIGHT be "feenished" in the woman's mind, but Mr. Peace knew there was some hurried and unpleasant work to do ere he could call it the end. Dumping the captain upon his bunk, he returned immediately to the cabin. This job wouldn't wait.

The mate would have to be informed at once, of course. He'd have to keep the deck while Mr. Peace cleaned up the mess. And Chang, who was doubtless even now cowering beneath his blankets in his berth—he'd rouse out Chang to help him. Trust a Chink to hold his tongue. But the crew, well, the less they knew the better. Let them know tomorrow that Jude was dead and buried.

Over the side tonight. Jude and his Black One, and the cursed drum as well, all sewed up together in the same bundle and consigned to the sea before dawn. No need of prayers and parsoning in this burial, grimly reflected Mr. Peace. Jude would be taking his god with him.

He started on deck to talk to the mate, and at the turn of the companion stairs encountered that worthy just stepping into the hatch.

"That you, Captain?" Mr. Bowcher's voice was excited and tremulous. "Oh, Peace. Mister, is the captain—"

"He's asleep, Mister," said Mr. Peace. "Deep asleep."

"Asleep," echoed the mate. "Oh. It's quieted down, it's over. Yes, asleep, of course. All over. Mister—" his voice lowered to a whisper—"were you in the cabin, sir, when they—"

"Yes, I was there," said Mr. Peace.

"And they—she—you know, Mister, was she—"

"No she wasn't," said Mr. Peace. "Get yourself together, Mister. She's all right. But Jude has met with an accident. A bad accident."

Mr. Bowcher gasped.

"Jude!" he exclaimed. "Is he—"

"Yes, he is," replied Mr. Peace. "Dead as Hobbs, with a bone-handled knife that you may know about sticking in his gullet. She says God put it there, and I'm not sure He didn't."

"Jude!" Mr. Bowcher breathed gustily. His voice was almost inarticulate. "Jude dead—and—" He fumbled with the door of the hatch, which he had drawn to behind him when he entered, and threw it open. "Look out there," he said.

"Why, the stars are shining!" exclaimed Mr. Peace.

"A few minutes ago," said the mate. "I never see the like before, Mr. Peace. Like a great hand tearing open the sky, Mister, and the stars shining through. And the wind, don't you hear, Mister, don't you feel? Dropped in a jiffy. Like something shut it off. The weather's broke, Mister. And the bosun just sang out to me that the pumps were sucking air."

"That's strange—well, interesting, isn't it?" said Mr. Peace, after an awkward in-

terval. "About time it blew itself out, if you ask me, sir. But about—"

"What's that?" whispered Mr. Bowcher, tensely.

They listened. From down below came the voice of a woman singing softly; a deep, throaty contralto singing that seemed to fill all the air about them. The words were foreign, but the air was ancient and familiar. It sounded like a lullaby.

"That?" said Mr. Peace, and he, too, breathed gustily. "Just another gale that's blowing itself out, sir. A tornado."

"Eh?" said Mr. Bowcher.

THE WORST MARCH

By Leonard H. Nason

A SOLDIER of the A. E. F., if he belonged to a combat branch, made some long and terrible marches. The one that I remember with the most horror was not a march along the front, not even the one from St. Mihiel to the Argonne, when it rained every day, but the first march I made in France, from the railroad station to the rest camp. It seemed that debarkation camps, or rest camps so called, were always located as far as possible from the railroad or the dock and always at the top of a high hill. A man would be disembarked, laden with full pack —it was full, too, three blankets, extra underwear, extra shoes, etc., for the men had just been issued all these things in the port of embarkation, and had not yet learned to get rid of them at the first opportunity— —and hiked to the rest camp.

I was landed at Paulliac, up the river from Bordeaux. We rode several hours in a train, and then, about midnight, started from the Gare de Medoc to hike to Camp Genicart. In our packs we had all our outfit: Blankets, shelter half, poles and pins, bacon can with two cooked meals, sandwiches in mess-kit, canteen full of water, overcoat, slicker, extra shoes tied on the pack, rifle and bayonet. We were a company of casuals, all of us recently discharged from hospital, and newly landed from cramped quarters on the transport.

It was a terrible march. By the time we crossed the bridge over the Garonne, I wanted to die. The column halted fifteen minutes every hour, and when it did so, every man fell down in his tracks, mud and all, and groaned aloud. The retreat from Moscow could not have been half so bad. Across the bridge stretched a long vista of darkness, the highroad to Paris. We followed it in despair, and at the far end of it climbed the steep hill to Lormont, where the camp was. Here we were told that the camp was at hand, otherwise we would have quit cold. The column made three halts climbing that hill, and when at last we reached the top, and found the camp was only a mile farther on, we felt almost cheerful.

Not so long ago I made that same journey from the Gare de Medoc to Genicart in an auto. I had my wife with me, and I pointed out to her the different landmarks that I remembered: A statue on whose steps I had collapsed; the Poste de Police where I had seen my first *gendarme;* the ditch into which I threw my rifle. It was a long trip, and the hill into Lormont was as steep as the side of a house. I don't know to this day how I ever did it. At the top of the hill on that night so long ago, I made a vow that I would never again carry a pack so long as I remained in France. This vow I kept religiously, to the great expense of the United States Government.

Seeing It Through

by Jack Rendel-

THE day had been hot for December. The sun was a molten disk in a yellowish sky. Beneath it the Colorado Desert lay like savage ashes.

The boy paused, hoe in hand, to stare down the cart trail across the canyon "wash". Some one was riding up it, miles away, a mere dot amongst the mesquite bushes.

It couldn't be Hugh, coming back so soon. He must be still amongst the windmills and cottonwoods that marked distant Caliente. The boy could imagine him, carelessly handsome, leaning against the sand-scarred front of Sam Haskin's store and post-office. Besides, Hugh didn't ride in that lumpish way. He had a trick of lifting old Billy along as if they were one creature of abounding vitality.

It wasn't any of the Orlandez kids, either. They always came in a tribe, at a yelling tilt, filling the place with olive-skinned, white-toothed life.

Who in time was it, then?

His eyes turned cloudy gray in speculation. So few people came to the *mesa*. It was so far from everywhere, and when you reached it there was nothing. Only a sick man and two lads, who toiled, year after year, to keep life in a lot of date palms.

Lifting the hoe, he scraped another basin around another webbed, slender trunk. He was a pliant youngster of sixteen, clad in a two-piece garment of faded, patched whitey brown khaki. The tanned body beneath it had the lithe spareness of one bred in an arid region. By contrast to the sun darkened skin, his eyes and mop of blond hair seemed to shine with a light of their own.

Along that desolate, seventy-mile frying pan which backs up from the Salton Sea against the Julian range, he was known as "one of them kids up to the Palmito." But his true, legal name was Hale de la Sabla Markham. He might have staggered under it, had not his brother been equally branded as Hugh del Sol. Hugh had been born three months after their parents had first come to the desert. It is the perpetual sun which most strikes newcomers. By the time that Hale slid into the world, three years later, they had begun to notice the sand. So Sun and Sand had been pinned to their offspring for life.

A gopher snake came out of a hole and he grabbed and stuffed it inside his shirt. He needed that snake up in the kitchen; the trade rats were getting fierce. It hissed bravely, rasping its dry scales against his stomach. He slapped it down.

"Quit that," he told it, "you haven't sense to know when you're gonna be well off."

Across the *mesa* stretched a vaster snake of wooden troughs, bringing the water to the palms. A wet, thin trickle, on which depended all the fortunes of all the Markhams that were left. Hale frowned as he watched the dust dry soil sop it up.

"Getting mighty slim," he muttered. "If we don't have rain this winter—" He clouded again in the constant fear which always shadowed the Palmito. "Gosh, if that spring should quit on us."

He puffed a sigh which held all of a boy's instinctive rebellion at whatever his lot may be. He hated it when Hugh went off and left him with only Pa and those darned dates. There were the row of original trees which his father had imported from Africa sixteen years before. They were just coming into bearing now. In fact it was to learn the result of the forty pounds of fruit sent off to Los Angeles, that Hugh had gone to Caliente. Dwindling down from those elder palms were the rows of detached offsets, the youngest looking like wilted feather dusters stuck in the ground.

Gray-brown trunks veiled with silvery webbing; spreading tops of drab-green feathers. He thought that he hated those palms. But to one watching him it might have seemed as though their quality had entered his very body. There was the same slender, swaying strength, reaching upward in a single purpose.

They were Deglet Noors, fat and luscious, brought from some place in the Sahara where his father had once been. He wished Pa had stayed there. It would have been bully to be born in Africa. His eyes misted over with visions of caravans, camels, and cities rising whitely from purple sands. This old place was no good. His father had smiled once, in his thin way, and said that the only reason he had been able to keep it was because no one else had ever wanted it. Pa was like that. A stooped man, with a way of "knocking" himself in a bitter humor.

The prisoned gopher snake thrust a bewildered head through a rent in Hale's shirt. He smacked it amiably back and it flowed like a girdle about his hollow middle. The distant rider was at the spot where the *mesa* and canyon trails divided. He moved unhurriedly, like something fat and full fed. The horse's legs were multiplied by the heat dazzle that lay in bluish pools between the mesquites.

An unpleasant murk had covered the sky. The air seemed to evade one's lungs and settle round one's heart, like a foreboding. It was only mirage down there, distorting horse and rider. But with those six—eight—ten legs, and a black hump on top, it resembled a huge tarantula creeping remorselessly on. Hale found himself thrusting against it, as if his mind could change its course. It was at the trail fork now. If it would only turn behind the big rock—

Dropping the hoe, he leaped the flume and padded towards the house.

The place which he had always called home was a shack and lean-to, under the shade of some planted cottonwoods. His father sat before it, a frail man, vaguely dark. It was from their mother that his sons had really come. Like the house behind him he was time-worn, desert-worn, life-worn. He had the too brilliant eyes of the lunger, and his suppressed cough rattled like stones in a tin can.

He was painting, and Hale approved of that. Pa's pictures sometimes sold for as much as one hundred and fifty dollars in Los Angeles. Yet they weren't pretty. As one looked at them one could feel the desert heat and the bitter struggle of it all. Privately, Hale preferred the pictures on the calendars down at Haskin's store. But those occasional sales kept things going on the *mesa*.

"Are you too busy to pose for me?" his father asked, and Hale's face blanked.

"Shucks, Pa, I got to get those eight-year-olds wet up. They're drier'n the hinges of ——. There's a *santanya* blowing up across the Salton Sea, too. I've seen six pelicans since noon and they don't get so far unless there's something doing down there. Besides, it's too cold to be squatting around without any clothes on. And there's somebody coming, too."

"A stranger?"

"*Pero si*—I mean yep—yes." With a Boston-born parent one sometimes had to translate many times. "He'll be here in half an hour."

"Really—I can't imagine who it is," Markham said.

Of course he couldn't, if it were a stranger. But Pa was like that. He would turn a letter over and over, wondering who it was from, instead of opening it.

"We must ask him to supper," he finished, and Hale's face shut again, as if a shade were drawn over it.

"I won't cook for him. I don't like him."

Markham sighed. It would be useless to argue that one could hardly dislike a man one had never seen. It was as impossible to reason with his sons as it had been with their mother. More so, for they had such

ways of escape out into this desert. To him it was a prison. But they turned its pages like those of a book written in a language which he could never understand. But they understood it, and each other as well.

Hugh, for instance, would know instantly why Hale professed dislike for a stranger passing at a distance. His glance fell in horror on Hale's waist.

"Under your shirt—let me see—is it some horrid growth?"

"That! Oh —'s nothing but an old snake. Say, I better start supper. Hugh's going to be hungry. I'll hunt up some green peppers and ripe tomatoes outa the patch and make some Spanish rice."

Pa looked as if he were going to say more about that snake. It was never advisable to linger too long in his vicinity. With a flicker of brown, bare feet, Hale leaped backward over a bench and was gone.

SLICING onions, in the tacked-on kitchen, Hale recited Shakespeare in the pure Massachusetts which he could use when so disposed.

"Lay on, Macduff.
And damned be he who first cries 'Hold—enough!'"

He and Hugh were acting "Macbeth" evenings. It wasn't so much fun as when Ma had been there to help them. But she had gone to San Diego eight years ago, and had never come back. He remembered her well. A tall, vital woman with a thrilling voice. She had got up one day and said, "I have seen you boys through long enough. I'm sick of this and I'm going." And that was that.

A hoof rang against a stone outside. His father coughed and a man spoke.

"Huh—paintin' pitchers, hey?"

The words contrived to be an insult. Wiping the onion tears with a smeared wrist, Hale glided out.

The man was still on his horse, which was lathered with unnecessary sweat. A massive man; somehow his thick, tightly-belted middle brought a suggestion of entrails. Hale instantly coined a private, unpleasantly descriptive name for him. With his beef-red face, horseshoe mustache and air of half truculent authority, he looked, Hale thought, like that crook sheriff in a moving picture he had seen down at Indio.

"I'm Crowe, I am," the man announced. "Jim Crowe—though they ain't many as tries to jump me—Ha-ha." He laughed in huge satisfaction at his own joke. "I'm the new deppity for this side the county, I am."

"The deputy what?" Markham asked.

"That's for them to find out as needs to. You see my star, don't you? My brother-in-law, he's the sheriff, appinted clear from San Diego; or maybe from Sacramento. You don't know, and I ain't going to tell you. You folks over this side been having it too much your own way." The man's face took on a tremendous darkness, like that of a thunder-cloud prepared to strike legal lightnings. "They's things," he said, "as need lookin' into over this side of the Salton. Too many queer birds a-nestin' up these here canyons, with nobody knowin' what they're up to. What you doin', hey, hid away here outa everybody's sight?"

"As you said," Markham answered, "I am painting a picture."

"Tryin' to get smart, hey? Well, I'm an of'cer of the law, I am," Crowe returned. "I've heard of you. Growin' date pa'ms, hey." He brooded round as if that were an actionable offence. "You and a coupla kids as your wife run off and left you with. Doing pretty well with them dates, too, in Los Ang'les, I heard."

"You have heard more than I," Markham agreed.

"Maybe so—" Crowe darkly nodded— "I got ways of. They's been a letter for you from some grocery up to Los Angeles, down in Caliente post-office for two three days."

Behind the cottonwoods, Hale turned to a quivering column of hate. His fingers itched to send a rock into that portly, abhorrent abdomen. The beef-red face was turning to a shifty calculation, and Hale shivered as he saw it. He knew too much of the devious, desert ways to doubt that the man held a certain power.

"Twenty acres o' them pa'ms, hey? And half on 'em coming into bearin'. You'll be makin' a good thing outa them, soon. Where d'ya get your water?"

"From a spring in the canyon, Mr. Crowe. The title is assured me by right of purchase."

"Yeah, you bought it from that lousy, Mexican Orlandez outfit, twenty years ago. All the title they ever had was one of them Spanish grants. We don't take much

stock in such now. If your spring's up the canyon, it must be over your property line and maybe on state school lands or something."

"The title is assured me, Mr. Crowe."

"Well, I'm here to perteck the public property, I am. I guess I'll take a look at this here spring." Crowe gathered his reins for departure, pausing for another broadside. "I seen one of your kids down to Caliente this noon. Long, yeller-headed galoot, with a sneerin' mouth on him. If he gets gay with Jim Crowe—all them pa'ms, dependin' on a spring across any line them Orlandez ever had. Maybe it ain't so good a prop'ty after all. And as to that boy of your'n, Markham, tell him that Jim Crowe don't take no dirty looks off any fresh kid. I got my eye out for him, and if he tries any monkey shines with an of'cer of the law. Maybe I'll meet him on the way back. He'll find it ain't healthy molestin' an of'cer of the law."

Hale was gone, slipping over the *mesa* edge so smoothly that not a falling stone betrayed him. That short cut saved him a good mile of the cart grade. Then out he went, bending low, amongst the tindery mesquite bushes. A cactus thorn stabbed his heel, and the heat beat up like an oven, but he never paused until he reached the trail fork.

Two miles back, this Crowe was riding monumentally down the grade. Busy with a knife, Hale slowly worked his way from the fork down to where the growth thinned out into scattering, seeming paths amongst the thinning bushes. In the failing light, even at a few rods, one could hardly see the dust-brown shrubs leaving their bases and moving to one side or the other, leaving a cleared plain way that was not the real trail.

At the thud of hoofs, he wormed himself into a thicker tangle and lay face downwards. There came a creak of leather, almost above him. Hale forebore even to peep, knowing how one human eye will attract another. The horse stopped in breathy surprize and Crowe's curse followed instantly.

"Ain't you got no sense, buttin' at them bushes? Here's the trail, to the right here. Get on."

The horse stepped on again. A gush of relief swept Hale and he went suddenly limp as a cat. A first star glittered down at him between twigs, and he lay in delicious satisfaction, listening to the retreating sounds of horse and man as they plodded slowly down the slope on a trail which led nowhere.

When Hale reached the grade again, darkness had settled down. The moon was a promise against which a peak stood out like black pasteboard. A lantern bobbed on the trail and Markham's voice called—

"Hale—Hale—"

They met at the big yucca on the hair-pin turn. The yellow lantern light showed Markham's face, thinly distraught, and Hale wondered what could be wrong. Pa was always getting worked up over the strangest things. His speech poured out.

"Hale, how could you go off like that? I am anxious about Hugh. That brute is going back to Caliente, and if they meet on the way—"

"Yeah, I know," Hale nodded, in his flat acceptance of desert things. "That guy'd shoot, *pronto*. He's that kind. He could get away with it, too, being a sort of sheriff and with that store gang back of him."

Balancing on one foot, Hale examined his cactus-prodded heel. He seemed to have no other care in life, just then. His father's face paled in disgusted anger.

"You knew that!" Markham's voice withered to a whisper. "You knew it, and yet you'd permit Hugh—"

The yucca loomed savagely above them; pressing leagues of solitude hemmed them in. He knew too well that, for whatever was to be done, they could depend only on themselves. For nearly twenty years he had been on the desert, but never of it. And the desert did not take quite kindly to that aloofness. It was well recognized that "them Markhams" were negligible.

"Have you no thought for your brother? That brute and my boy meeting out there in the wash. If only I had a horse."

Still poised like a dancer, Hale looked up in blank question.

"What's eating you, Pa? Hugh ain't going to meet that old buzzard. I fixed all that."

Markham's tension relaxed. How Hale could have "fixed" it he had no idea. But he had no doubt either. It simply meant that he was going to learn something more about these perpetually amazing sons of his. Hopping to the light, Hale lifted his foot to his father's hand.

"Squeeze that sticker out for me, Pa. I'll hold the lantern." Bending in the dust, Markham took the foot on his knee and Hale chattered on. "I heard that old tub talking, so I skinned down to the fork and moved two, three mesquites across the trail. Then I took out four, five more so as to make a false lead. Say, he went down it like a snake down a chuckawalla hole. That guy don't know a darn thing, Pa. His horse has got more sense'n he has. Even if it was getting dark, he oughta seen there wasn't no—any—cart tracks. I guess he was too plumb full of how grand he was—Squeeze hard, Pa, it's clear into the bone. He won't meet Hugh, not the trail he's hitting. He'll land down in that mess of ravines and cactus. Then I toted the bushes off and fixed it back again. Hurry, Pa. I got to get supper. Take a knife—"

It was only a brown heel, hot dusty, with the cactus thorn buried in it. But to Markham, in reaction from his anxiety, it was somehow beautiful. Yet one hardly says such things to one's sons. He said instead—

"I shall write to cousin Edward."

To Hale, cousin Edward was a legendary sort of person who lived in Washington, knew senators and dined with the president. He sent toys every Christmas, such as children of four and five might delight in. Hale privately considered him a man of small intellect.

"One of you boys." Markham decided, "must take the letter to Indio. From what I gathered from this Crowe's conversation, I prefer not to have the letter go through the Caliente office."

"Sure," Hale agreed, "that old Sam Haskins reads all the mail. Didn't you know that? What could cousin Edward do, Pa?"

"There never was yet a state representative who didn't want something in Washington," Markham explained. "Especially if they have wives. And cousin Edward is in a position to get those things for them; especially social invitations for the wives. And in return congressmen and senators can pull wires back in their home states. Wires that influence district attorneys, or whoever it is that appoints and manages sheriffs and so on. I know very little about these matters," Markham admitted, "but I know they are done. Is that clear to you?"

"No," Hale cheerfully replied. "I guess I'll go rub some salt on that heel."

THE kitchen reeked lusciously of onions, tomatoes, and green peppers stewing together. Dumping in some fistfuls of rice, Hale stirred vigorously. Outside a horse galloped up in a last fine spurt. Hugh's voice rang in the tented cottonwoods.

"Pa, here's the letter. I cashed the check; you shoulda seen their eyes bug out down at the store. Oh, Hale, come here."

Hale's muscles gathered to spring outside; then a more noble thought stayed them. He drew a dipperful from the water bucket. This was the chance he had waited for for days. All excited as he was, Hugh would be off his guard for once. Hale's lips were stiff with a grin as he screwed his tones down to the properly innocent regret.

"Aw heck, I got the rice going and it'll burn on me. You come here."

Dipper in hand, he ambushed by the door to the front room. This was the time that Hugh would get his. He would never suspect, and a dozen scores would be wiped out in one glorious ducking. A sudden deluge struck his neck; he howled, sputtered and dropped the dipper. There was Hugh grinning triumph from the other door, an emptied bucket in his hand.

"Thought you'd catch me, hey?"

"*Sangre sancto*," Hale yelled, "darn your fool hide." Even as he raged he laughed. Hugh's glory was as his own; you couldn't catch that boy, no sir—*jamas—nunca*. "How d'ya know I was laying for you?"

"The way you spoke," Hugh loftily told him. "I can tell every time. You sound so goshamighty innocent and a darn fool giggle under it." Then his heights melted in bursting news, "Say, whatcha think they gave us for those dates? Two bits a pound, and they'll take all we send."

"Wha-at—" Hale launched himself at the bringer of good tidings, in all his Caliente-going gorgeousness of whipcord breeches, high laced boots, and blue flannel shirt. A mahogany arm fended him off.

"Hey kid, you're all wet. Say, I got me a real hair cut, how's it look?"

Hugh pivoted in conscious elegance while Hale admired.

"Swell. All smooth and shiny, just like the brass knobs in Señora Orlandez' parlor bedstead." Hale's eyes misted with amazing mathematics. "Say, two bits a pound and they say those palms run to two hundred each, later on. Forty trees to the acre

and twenty acres, that's eight hundred, at fifty dollars a tree—gosh—Hugh."

"Oh well, it don't always work out quite so well as that," Hugh returned in magnificent calm. "Hurry that chuck while I give Billy his feed."

"I'll open up that can of pineapple we got left over from last fourth July," Hale declared.

Hugh pushed back his plate and lit a real cigaret, another sign of this newfound affluence.

"Yep, I know Crowe," he said. "No, kid, these cigarets are too strong for you. Oh well—you can have one, for fixin' that trail. This Crowe's been round here two months now. He's in with Haskins and the store bunch. They say his brother-in-law is sitting pretty with that San Diego gang. I guess he sent this coot round to see if there was any pickings here. They run him clear off the Tin Hat Mine. Those boys don't stand for much and they got the Legion back of 'em. Then he went over to Los Ojos and scared old man Sepulveda clear out of his wits. He must have heard something about us, or he wouldn't have nosed up here. But he better not start anything with me."

Hale glowed, that was the talk. Markham's hand was like a bird's claw on his son's brown wrist.

"Be careful, my boy."

"Don't worry, Pa. If I start anything, I'll finish it."

"But think what the finish might have to be."

They were only words, so it must have been that too strong tobacco which made Hale feel as though a cold hand had squeezed his stomach. Hugh leaned anxiously over.

"I told you so, kid. Get along outside, quick, you look like you was going to heave up your supper. *Vamos*, now."

A shove sent Hale through the door. Everything out there was gray and cold from the moon shining through thicker murk. He heard his father saying, "I shall write cousin Edward at once." What good would that do? A sick man and two boys, with cousin Edward a million miles away— He couldn't explain why he felt so deathly sick. It was a horror of some fattish, full fed thing that might even now be creeping up across the "wash" like a huge tarantula—coming, in some mysterious way, to spit poison at Hugh and work evil with the spring.

In the night Hale woke to a black world, with a steady drumming on the shingles overhead. Excitedly he prodded Hugh.

"Gee—it's *raining*."

"Yep, I know. This'll fill up the water holes. We'll be safe for the year now."

"With water we'll get a crop," Hale decided, "and say, then we can go to San Diego and look around for Ma."

A long silence, at which he prodded again until Hugh kicked back at him.

"Quit poking me, I heard you. See here, I told Pa you'd have to know, sometime. Ma never went to San Diego. She went straight to New York. They say she sings all the time. Pa gets papers with pieces in them about her."

"What did she go away *for?*" Hale persisted. "Didn't she like us?"

"Yep, she liked us all right. I guess she just *had* to go. I feel the same, sometimes, but I got to see Pa and you through first."

"If you go," Hale declared violently, "you got to let me come too."

"As to that," Hugh chuckled, "I never yet been able to figger out a way of stopping you. Go to sleep."

MARKHAM, wandering in the night unease of his sickness, shaded the candle from his sleeping sons' eyes. They would never know how often he looked down upon them so.

A queer mess, his life had proved. Paris, Rome, romance, the promise of a career, all faded to this desert prison of hot air. Yet out of it he had pulled twenty acres of palm trees and the two long lads stretched side by side. Sun and Sand; those names had been their mother's whim. A touch of his talent was in their fingers, something of her beauty on their bodies; and a certain New England steadfastness withal.

In two years Hugh would be twenty-one, and that birthday would be his father's release. Markham knew that he had only to relax the will to live—he could make a dignified end of it, too. His pictures would be valuable—once he was dead. The palm grove was something of a fortune in itself. That was why greedy hands were already reaching for it.

He must contrive to hang on until Hugh was of legal age. He must see the boys through.

The April sun was like a flame. Even

Hale's tough soles could hardly stand the heated ground. Thirty miles away, the Salton Sea was like a bar of molten steel. All around, the mountains stood up, hard and glittering as yellow glass.

Hugh had driven off in the dawn, taking their father to Caliente to catch the stage for Indio. He was to meet a man who would pass through on the Overland, somebody from Washington. Cousin Edward had arranged the interview. Markham would stay in Indio all night, and Hugh would hardly try to make it back to the *mesa* before dark. Hale hated being alone, but somebody had to stay and nurse those palms.

The hot weather had burst open the spathes of sulfur-yellow blooms. Now they had to be fertilized. He cut a blossom head from one of the two male trees, then dragged a ladder up and down the rows, climbing it to shake the male pollen on the female pistils. This afternoon, tomorrow, and tomorrow, it would have to be done again. He wished those fool trees knew enough to run their own business.

He'd have to turn the water on them, too. Five rains had kept the soil wet all winter and filled up an old spring behind the house. Not once since Christmas had they tapped the canyon flow. He turned the faucet and it gushed out, blood red with rust. For a while it spurted strongly, then dwindled and died, with convulsive shudders all along the pipe.

That pipe must have broken somewhere. Of course everything had to come on the day he was alone. A fat chance there was of mister darn Hugh being around when there was anything to be done. He was off blowing himself in Caliente, leaving all the work. They had quarrelled that morning over who should drive their father down. Hale seethed as he thought, too late, of all the vitriolic things he might have said.

Two miles to hike up that canyon. After all, it wasn't so bad, with the steep, red sides starred by great white yucca spikes. A lingering pool glittered bluely between scarlet rocks. Around it, some of the native, desert fan palms went up like tall towers, their leaves green and silver against the sky. He stripped and splashed his hot body. It was lucky Pa wasn't there, or he'd have to pose to be painted. Pulling shirt and trousers over his wet skin, he went on again.

The break was at the spring itself. A strange break, that made Hale grow cold. Two lengths of pipe deliberately broken off and cast aside. And on a post a printed notice declared that the spring had been—

—"Filed on and all rights to such are vested under law in the undersigned. —CROWE.

The world was all wrong. The thing which he had feared was come upon them.

A man and a horse were resting under the umbrella trees when Hale panted back to the shack. It was Tony Sepulveda, and Hale ran towards him shouting:

"Hey Tony, what you think? That old Crowe, he—"

"*Ah si;* yes, keed; I been come tell you."

"But it's our water," Hale yelled. With one sweep of an olive-colored hand, Tony rolled a cigaret.

"He file on those spreeng, yes. An' thees morning, down for Caliente, he offair you *padre* one t'ousand dollair for thees rancho. 'You ain't got no watair,' he say. 'Nor you ain't got no pull at San Diego, nor no money for mek law weeth. And by tam you mek holler those tree be all plumb dry up to ——!' "

"Wh—what did Pa say?" Hale quivered.

"O-ah, you *padre*, he say 'I theenk I no sell, Mistair Crowe,' Jus' like that, he say eet and he get in that stage and go off for Indio.

"And aftair that" Tony went on, "that Crowe, he mek ogly talk for Hugh, and Hugh he mek hit—so—*bam*—right on he nose. Then Crowe he pull gun and try arrest Hugh, but two those feller from Teen Hat Mine be there and they say, 'You ain't got no right mek arrest. You been start eet and we be weetness.' Then they tek Hugh off along weeth them."

Hale could almost see and smell it. The short street with its suncracked shacks under drooping pepper trees. Thumping windmills, hot dust, an acrid odor of sweat, and the vacant-faced desert loafers pressing round the fight which not one of them would have dared to start.

"Aft'—noon mail," Tony went on, "he breeng letter for Crowe from San Diego. He read and go stomp-stomp up to Sam Haskins and say, 'What in time you got me into? Why for did you tell me those Markham ain't got no friends?' Haskin, he read, and say, 'I never tell you to mek monkey-shine weeth that spreeng.' And Crowe, he

say, 'Huh, you tryin' to crawl out from under, hey? Read what my broth'-in-law say about those Markham raisin' Cain in Wash' postmaster-general office 'bout you.' "

"Then that Crowe, he stomp-stomp some more an' dreenk from he heep, an' say, 'I goin' for that stinkin' place and *get* that yong—' "

Tony's narrative ended brilliantly in a crackle of qualified nouns. Hale rolled a cigaret with shaking fingers.

"Crowe said he was coming up here? Say, Tony, you—you going stay the night, aren't you?"

"No can do, keed. Me *padre*, he seeck, an' onlee them fool keed seestair, weeth nobuddee home. You come go home weeth me, keed. That what for I come."

Tony stretched a sinuous leg with a jingle of silver spur. Hale laid a hand on it to sense the comfort of its warm friendliness. He had a horror of the darkness already beginning to fall. A horror of a slow, fattish thing which might come creeping like a tarantula across the wash. Hugh could look after himself, he argued. Most likely he'd stay at the Tin Hat all night. And he needn't have sneered so, this morning, when —Hale could see himself riding off with Tony to the garlic-scented safety of Los Ojos. But he heard himself speaking differently.

"I—I can't, Tony. You see, Hugh might come back, and—I got to see it through—"

THE darkness was horrible, filled with lurking shadow shapes of fear which the loudest whistling failed to dissipate. One could feel the night simply waiting for something to happen.

Yet it was such a surprize when it came. The fellow must have sneaked up the grade on foot. Hale turned cold as he pivoted round, hands in air. That revolver barrel was a potent argument. Crowe came in, with his disgusting middle, his face glazed by a poisonous smirk.

"Where's that —— brother o' yourn?"

"He's gone to the Tin Hat Mine for the night."

"You lie." The man exhaled bootleg liquor and a peculiar venom, both bitterly dangerous. The revolver prodded Hale's back. "I can wait. May's well do it comfortable. In the parlor, hey, along o' your pa's pitchers. March on, an' if you try any monkey business I'll blow the gizzard plumb outen you. I'll teach you stinkin' fools somethin'."

Hot lamplight, the familiar safeties of the room converted to a trap by this sinister presence. Himself, lashed to a chair while the sweat ran down into his eyes. It couldn't be real—yet the trouble was that it *was*.

Against the wall Crowe stood hidden from any possible eyes at the door. "I can wait," he said. "I'd wait all night for that ——."

Hale marvelled that any one could think of Hugh in such a way. He wished they hadn't quarrelled in the morning. Hugh would come rattling up in the old buggy. He'd stride in, with laughing eyes and hair all yellow in the lamplight. And then—

"Washin'ton," Crowe muttered. "Fat lot Washin'ton's doin' for you now. Self-defense, that's how I'll bring in it. I got a pull up to San Diego. I'll wing him when he comes in, an' then I'll have some fun with him."

There was madness in the man. A swollen ego smarting from a lad's laugh. And there was the squeak of a buggy wheel on the grade. Hale felt all the blood in his body gather round his heart. The revolver barrel pointed straight at him.

"If you so much as let out a peep, I'll get *you* first. An' it'll make it worse for him, too."

Pictures—pictures—all of Hugh and himself. They could never keep apart, even though they quarrelled. And those quarrels meant nothing. Always Hugh—and if he shouted warning it would only bring Hugh running to his aid. The room was a trap, baited with himself.

Wheels rasping outside. Hugh's shout, "Oh Hale—"

Crowe's whisper trickled into Hale's ears.

"You answer him, see. An' if you make any break I'll tie him up beside you and set fire to the house."

What millions of things one could think of in a second—screech, roll over, chair and all. Give it all up and get shot. What was it Hugh had said once? "I can always tell—you sound so darn innocent and giggly." But how could he—now—with all this—

Oh, if he only could. His lips froze, then he heard something out in front of them and wondered if it were his own voice.

"Right here—where else would I be?"

"Where's here?" Hugh called.

"Come and look."

If Hugh came unsuspectingly—then his last living thought would be a conviction that Hale had betrayed him. Crowe's lips took a smirk of evil understanding. He was sure now that he had them in his hands. The one was offering up the other to save his own life. He fixed his eyes on the door through which Hugh must enter.

Hale caught a paler flash in the darkness outside the window. There was Hugh, with his funny grin, his eyes alight in mischief. In his hand was a melon—a ripe, ripe melon—just the kind to squash deliciously on an unwary back. Hale caught a change on Hugh's face, and closed his eyes lest Crowe should catch their flicker. He heard the melon whizz past him and burst in a blinding ooze of pulp and seeds. A roar as Crowe's hands went up to his face. The revolver dropped on the floor and Hale flung himself, chair and all, upon it.

"We'll make him get in the buggy," Hugh was saying, "then we'll truss his legs up, and you hang on behind and keep poking that gun in his back." Hugh laughed in high excitement. "Gee, how they'll howl at him down in Caliente. The goshamighty Jim Crowe, packed in by a couple of boys. Gee, kid, what's the matter? It's all over now, honest, there isn't a thing to be scared of."

But that passion of relief was beyond control. Like an anguished young cougar, Hale threw himself at Hugh's chest.

"Wh—what did you think when you came to the w—window and saw—I tried to make it sound like—you know—like when I'm laying for you some way—honest, Hugh, I wasn't doing it for myself—"

"Aw ——, kid, it's all right," Hugh, soothed. "Here, dry up, you're wetting my shirt clear through—the minute I saw him I knew how you were seeing it through. Dry up, kid—"

Colenso's Mistress

by Herbert S. Gorman

THE rotting wharf sagged like a broken jaw
Into the still lagoon, and jagged piles
Uprose like yellow teeth along its edges.
Colenso bared discolored fangs that shone
In faded emulation of the ruin,
And stared with yellow cat's eyes in the waters
That sucked disconsolately round the logs.
His face was colored like the map of hell
And baked in tropic suns until it cracked
Like withered mummied cats of Zagazig.
Beyond the wharf the hut rose in the banyans
And always round its eaves the jungle muttered,
Blowing her sultry breath through tattered nets,
And filling musty hollows with strange gnats
And stinging atoms of the insect tribes
That hovered with dull buzzing round the holes
That served for door and windows. Padded beasts
Crept to the borders of the underbrush
And stared through amber disks and when the lion
Volleyed his vocal thunder through the darkness
Colenso clenched his twisted hands and answered.
He laughed until his heat-cracked lips rolled back,
Uncovering his yellow sharpened teeth.
"Five years tonight," Colenso cried, "five years
Since last I heard the blazing cities shrill
Like crickets in the grasses of the world.
Five years tonight since last I saw white faces
That spun about me like a rain of petals.
Five years tonight since morning marched to milk-cans
And night fell squealing on the roofs of houses.
Five years tonight—" He laughed until he choked,
And somewhere in the dark the striped hyena
Awoke the blue macaws with idiot echoes.
"What, brother, are you there?" Colenso cried,
"Laugh with me, brother, laugh." The monkeys whimpered,
Burying shrivelled heads in one another;
And somewhere in the night the painted tiger
Lifted his giant face and lashed his tail.

The banyan traders from Mozambique came down,
Driving their long boats through the dark lagoon,

"Colenso's Mistress," copyright, 1925, by Herbert S. Gorman.

Boats oared by Bwongwe black men smeared with mud,
And creaking boots clumped on the swaying wharf.
Colenso met them with a stony silence,
Purchased tobacco and supplies and bade
Them pleasant voyage, turning with an air
Of sinister finality. They bared
Their betel-colored teeth and shook their heads
But rowed away across the dark lagoon.
What mystery of a man was this? What dæmon
Beyond the dreams of clay-caked devil-doctors
Clutched him so closely to its jungle heart?
They asked in vain. The stars were more loquacious
Than gnarled Colenso. So the years passed out
In painted mystery like Congo priests;
And in his sagging hut Colenso lived,
Hearing at night the tomtoms in the distance,
Driving the devils from the flickering clearings,
Hearing the jungle-creatures move and moan
And scream and laugh and whistle.

One hot day
Colenso saw a long boat drawing in
And wandered down to bid it sheer away.
He needed no supplies. His smoking box
Was filled to overflowing with tobacco;
And as for conversation—he'd the jungle
With all its many voices night and day.
The traders wanted water. They were bearing
A sick white woman to a southern place.
The heat moaned in the air and wrung its hands
As with set eyes Colenso stared upon her.
The clammy brow was beaded; the brown lips
Were caked with fever and the hollow eyes,
Far-sunken in the outward-straining bones,
Were fixed steadfastly on Colenso's face.
The minutes crawled between them sluggishly,
Like a sick snake, and still they stared and stared.
The woman spoke at last, and with an effort:
"Are you Colenso?" "Some men call me that."
"They told me of you and your lonely life.
Have you no friends?" He turned and flung the answer
Most grudgingly across his blackened shoulders.
"My mistress is the jungle." When the night
Came with its multitudinous savagery
Across the sweating bush he sat and stared
Into the writhing shadows. Lions roared
But he was silent. Rings of fiery eyes
Inclosed him on all sides but he was blind.

Only the waters lapping round the piles
That staggered underneath the rotting wharf
Whispered that they were always going south
Following one who fared that way to die.

The heavy rains came down and traders huddled
In fever-haunted huts and cursed the skies,
And watched their tradings go to wrack and ruin.
For two long months it rained. For two long months
The sky was striped with silver chains that swung
And beat the palm-fronds with their heavy links.
And then, so suddenly it seemed a dream,
The heavy rains fled south like routed ghosts.
The jungle steamed beneath the burning sun;
The swollen rivers shouted through their gorges;
And brimming ponds shrank back to puddle-holes.
The traders caulked their boats and loaded trinkets,
Bright bolts of cotton, knives and beads, tobacco,
And, oared by sullen blacks, sheered out again
For coastwise trading. One of them beat down
Toward Colenso's wharf, his wonder sharpened
To note the ruin of the rains and see
How gnarled Colenso bore his loneliness.

The rotting wharf sagged like a broken jaw
As ever, and the dark lagoon was calm,
Too calm and silent for the trader's mind
Who read great mysteries in little things.
His boots clumped up the boards; he shouted loudly,
And nothing but the jungle-echoes whirled
High up above his head like mocking birds.
"What ho, Colenso! What, Colenso, ho!"
The hut was empty and the whispering leaves
Murmured excitedly to one another,
While heavy flowers bent contemptuous heads
And slyly viewed the trader's futile search.
All through the day he wandered up and down,
Beating the bushes, calling, but no sign
Of gnarled Colenso starred the wilderness.
Blue-feathered vultures of the twilight cast
Their lengthening shadows down and suddenly
The trader felt a presence in the stillness,
A mad reality that lurked behind
The ominous underbrush and stared at him
With lidless eyes that never wavered once.
He shivered and retreated to the hut,
Calling his black men to him, There they slept
Until the morning like a parakeet

Of burning plumage flew above the trees.
And in the early light he saw two sheets
Of closely written paper pinned against
The soaking timbers of the rotting hut.
He placed them in his wallet and the boat
Crept softly from that dark deserted place
And the still eyes that lurked beyond the clearing.

The boat slid northward on the sun-streaked sea
And with a grave relief the trader witnessed
Familiar landmarks lead him to his haven.
Hurrying to the hut they called a club
He drew his comrades round him with an air
Of great excitement. "Here you have," he said,
"The only sign Colenso left," and drew
The papers from his wallet. Carefully
He spread them out and read the short one first:

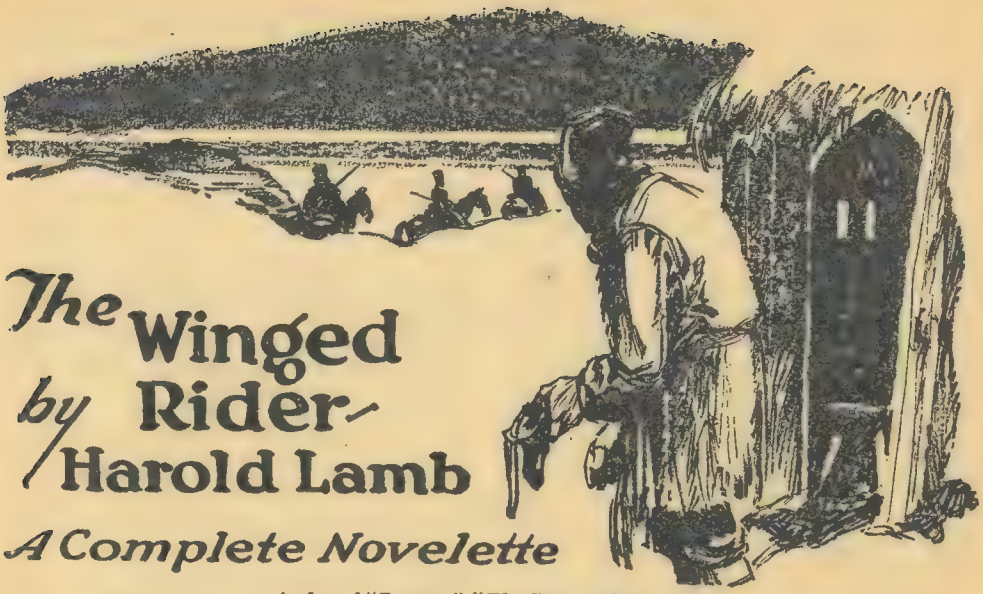
"The stillness leans her chin upon my sill
And stares upon me with great moony eyes.
My thoughts creep up like adders from a nest
And sting me with sharp fangs to memories
I thought deep-buried underneath the years.
Below the cooling slag-heaps of my days
I sank them with a curse and now they rise
To sting me back to life, accursed ones.
Flinging my world away I fled from Time
And, with a bitter laugh, Time dogs me out;
All this because a dying woman's eyes
Looked into mine and saw what no one yet
Had ever seen. She looked but once and saw
The Mystery behind the mystery,
The Loneliness behind my loneliness,
And all my armor against Time became
A shrivelled cloak of autumn leaves that drift
About me, falling leaf by leaf forever.
And then they took her south to die. They took
Her south who took my peace with her, who took
My secret with one burning look that lasted
Eternities in one unbidden minute.
I must go south before the jungle wakens,
The jealous darkness at my door that holds
The hollow shell that once I called my heart.
Before the great rains come I must go south."

"How could the man go south?" asked one who yawned
And listened with an air of great fatigue.
"He had no boat." "Colenso did not go,"

The trader answered. "Here you have the reason."
He smoothed the second sheet of paper, cleared
His throat and read aloud the scribbled words:

"I can not go. Another holds me here,
Darker and stronger than that dying face
That called me to the south and that old world
Wherein I moved in some forgotten life.
Strong as a tiger and with sultry mouth
She came last night and muttered in my ear.
Out of the dark behind the hut she came,
Her eyes like amber jewel-stones, her breast
As tawny as a lion's hide. She came
With slow and sliding hands about my head,
Caressed me in hot arms and whispered things
That chilled the feeble marrow in my bones.
Her heart beats in the tomtoms and she crouches
Forever in the dark beyond the door,
Encircling me until I have no strength
To venture from my clearing. When the night
Is frosted with great stars she speaks to me,
Telling me monstrous things. She laughs and whispers
The secret of the silence of the tiger,
The dark ambiguous hatred of the lion,
And why they loathe the littleness of men.
She croons about me in the somber places
And clutches me against her black, warm heart
And smothers me with hot and bloody kisses.
In every pulse she throbs. In every vein
Her fever-fire runs through till I am part
Of her vast shadowy soul. I can not go
After the white face that once called me south
For I am part of her throughout all Time.
Last night she lured me with soft words and called
Me from my dream of going south. Tonight,
Westward I strike into her mystery,
Into the dark unmanifested places,
There to be lost in her eternal rustling."

The trader put the paper down and coughed.
The listeners were silent till one said:
"The man was crazy." But the trader shook
His head and peered out at the crouching jungle
And shuddered and stood up and said, "Good night."



The Winged Rider

by Harold Lamb

A Complete Novelette

Author of "Bogatyr," "The Snow Driver," etc.

I

WHOEVER draws a sword and sheathes it without having used it will taste shame; whoever lets a blade rust in the scabbard will know death. Nay, let thy weapon be bright and clean as thine honor, but use it not until there is need.

—PROVERB OF THE AFGHANS.

UPON a day early in the seventeenth century three Cossacks trotted south on the snow road that ran beside the river. They were in no haste because they had far to go and this portion of the steppe was unknown to them.

In the vast plain that stretched from the forests of the north to the deserts of Central Asia they might have pressed on for a month without coming upon any landmark in the white sea of snow under the gray clouds.

The inhabitants of the steppe, men and beasts, were in winter quarters; the herds of half-wild cattle and horses that grazed in the rich grass during the brief summer were penned up; the fields of corn and wheat that gave sustenance to the isolated villages were invisible; the wagon-tents of roving Tatars had gone elsewhere; even the Volga river was ice-bound—no merchant barks appeared within its reaches and the songs of the boatmen were no longer heard.

It was a time of hunger, when the starving preyed on the full-fed, and the wolf packs ran lean.

The three Cossacks who followed the narrow trail had a sufficiency of food in their saddle bags, and they were not the sort of men to lose their way. Only, hereabouts, they must turn to the right and leave the river. They were on a broad bend of the Volga and some twenty miles to the west the river Don made a similar bend toward them. At this point merchants bound for the Black Sea landed their goods and carried them over to the Don. And pirates, tired of one river, would work their skiffs overland to the other. All that day the three warriors had been looking for traces of the portage.

When they found it they meant to make camp, reaching the frozen Don the next day, and striking due west until they gained the shelter of the Siech—the war encampment of the Zaporoghian Cossacks, their destination. Moreover, on the portage they expected to find the hut of an Armenian trader, or a wayside tavern that would give them some protection against the storm that all three knew to be coming down the Volga at their heels.

The youngest warrior, a remarkably fine looking man, rode in advance, watching the ominous wrack of clouds that hid the sun, studying the surface of the snow on his right, picking out the tracks of a wandering wolf. The wolf had been following the slot of an antelope without much hope because he had turned aside to try for a hare—

vainly. So much the young Cossack read in a flurry of marks in the snow.

He was Kirdy, called the "White Falcon" by his comrades; and now he was white indeed, for his slender shoulders were wrapped in a *svitka* of splendid ermine, gift of the great Muscovite Tsar whom he had well served. But his face was brown and merry, and he rode as a nomad rides, crouching in short stirrups.

The heaviest of the Cossacks, Ayub, the Oak—a man six feet and a half in height, armed with a gigantic broadsword that he carried slung to his shoulders—glanced at the youngster admiringly.

"Eh, how is that?" he cried. "You say Kirdy is not in every way a warrior. Then something is biting you, because as —— lives he is a regular *bogatyr*—a hero."

Khlit, surnamed the "Wolf," a gaunt figure in gray sheepskins, did not look up or answer.

"He's your grandson, you old dog!" resumed Ayub earnestly. "He's a master hand with the saber, by ——! Once he clipped my mustache for me, and I've never taken grass in my teeth for any other dog-brother. That's the truth."

Khlit nodded gravely and Ayub glanced at the aged Cossack suspiciously.

"*Umpff!*" he grunted. "And here's something else. Kirdy can lead men. Because he's not afraid of a vampire or the arch-fiend himself, men will follow him anywhere. Isn't that the truth?"

"*Ay-a tak*," assented Khlit. "Aye so."

"Then why is he not a warrior in all things?"

Ayub, usually careless and good-natured, was puzzled and a little angry. At first with tolerance, then with joy, he had watched Kirdy. On the road, in the press of battle, and at the Muscovite court, he had seen this youth, who had emerged from the depths of Central Asia, bear himself bravely and modestly. He knew that Khlit's grandson was wiser than other boys. And he looked forward to the moment when Kirdy would be brought before the *atamans* of the Cossacks of the Siech. This moment, Khlit had said, was not at hand because the young warrior was lacking in one way.

"Kirdy," Khlit made answer, "is blind."

Ayub stared and then scratched his ear.

"Blind? Only look at him. If he is blind, my mother was a sow."

"His eyes have not been opened."

"*Ekh-ma!* It may be that he has few hairs in his mustache, and that he's drunk more milk than corn brandy. He blushes when he looks at a fair maiden. But he can search out an ambush like an old Zaporoghian."

Again Khlit nodded seriously.

"An ambush but not a soul."

"How, a soul?"

GLOVED hands clasped on his saddle horn, the old leader ruminated. Ayub, his *kounak*—comrade—was a warrior of few ideas. Since Khlit had said that Kirdy was lacking in one way, Ayub would decide that the young warrior was a coward or a weakling or a fool. And Kirdy most certainly was none of that. So Ayub must be made to understand what was in Khlit's mind.

"It is true," he growled, "that the sucking pig yonder is a swordsman." Although Kirdy had been honored by the Don Cossacks, it was not for Khlit, his grandfather, to praise him to another Cossack. "Yet what sword stroke can parry treachery? *Hai*, the boy is still blind in this way: he has not learned to see what lies in another man's soul—treachery or good faith."

"Well, that's easily seen," argued Ayub the Zaporoghian. "When a man draws steel on you he is a foe, right enough; if he spreads his legs under the same table and drinks from the same keg he is a comrade."

"Not always."

This ability in Khlit to read men's hearts, to scent danger and to strike before he was overcome, had kept life in the old Cossack's scarred body in a place where most men died swiftly and violently almost before they had sons of their own. He wanted to live until he could bring Kirdy to his old companions of the Zaporoghian Siech who were the chosen warriors of the Cossacks. That the youth was a redoubtable warrior and would soon be a leader of the Cossacks, he knew—provided he could give to Kirdy this last bit of wisdom, the fruit of his long years of strife.

"This young dog," he explained, "was weaned in the tents of the Mongol khans beyond the roof of the world. There, in a man's *yurta*, a wanderer is safe from treachery. If friendship is pledged, friendship is kept. Aye so. Even among the Afghans a foe rides boldly, his weapon drawn in his hand. Only here—" with the stem of his

short clay pipe he pointed at the dark mists that ran around the edge of the horizon at their backs—"in the cities where Christian folk gather together will a man hold out his hand to you and stab you, to take your horse."

"Aye, or your wallet, if it clinks of silver," assented the big Zaporoghian reminiscently. "Only in the camps of the *bratzi Kasaki*, of the brother Cossacks, is your back safe from the knife or your purse from a thief's fingers."

"We are not there yet. Kirdy, the young son of a jackal, can not see treachery. Yet in the *yurtas* of Christendom he will meet treachery. Only one thing is more to be guarded against than the faithlessness of the men of Frankistan*."

"What is that?"

Ayub's mind ran on vampires, and fiends that, in the likeness of men, climbed up behind a rider and sucked the blood from his neck. The big warrior feared spirits heartily.

"Women." Smoldering fires of memory quickened the gray eyes under shaggy brows.

Ayub stroked down his mustaches to hide a grin. A woman—so long as she be not a witch—he did not fear at all. Yet he stood in awe of Khlit, who had emerged from the unknown world that lay to the east of the Volga. Behind the silence of the wanderer and his grandson lay tales of mighty battles, of the courts of strange kings, and the arts of the magicians of Cathay.

"*Ekh-ma*," he muttered. "And how will you teach him to read souls?"

But Khlit, having made Ayub understand what was in his mind was well content to hold his peace.

"Brothers," Kirdy's clear voice hailed them, "here is the trail."

THE trail was no more than a track left by a single horse, winding up over hillocks, bare except for a fringe of sedge tips and scrub oak. The track, ploughing through a foot of snow, had been made by a small pony, heavily laden, whose rider did not trouble himself to dismount and break the crust for the horse. So much the Cossacks saw at a glance.

They would have doubted that this was the portage leading to the Don, but for a building ahead of them—a dot of black in the gray sea that stretched away under the darkening mantle of clouds.

And the track of the pony led past this habitation—neither block-house nor tavern. It was a tiny wooden tower with thatched

roof, large enough to shelter only one man. And a human being did emerge from it—a serf in greasy sheepskins and leg wrappings who held out an open pouch to them.

Ayub had reached into his wallet for a silver coin when the occupant of the tower croaked at him:

"Toll, wanderer—toll for three. Aye, three silver rubles it will be."

This he repeated in a kind of hoarse singsong and the Zaporoghian who had taken him to be a beggar withdrew his hand from the wallet empty.

"Hi, animal—what was that?"

"Three silver rubles it will be."

"May the foul fiend take you and your three rubles! Here is no bridge or gate, and you talk of toll to Cossacks on the steppe."

The keeper of the tiny tower merely held out the sack, pointing his finger at them in turn, his lips moving as he counted three. Through his long, tangled hair his small eyes peered at them fiercely.

"Now by the emperor of —— and his dam!" cried Ayub who was growing angry. "If you had ten men to back you with halberds you'd not smell a Cossack kopek. We'd toll you with sword edges!"

Rising in the stirrups he looked around for any sign of another dwelling or a trace of smoke against the leaden sky. The steppe appeared deserted except for the shaggy man of the tower—and this tower was too small to admit the giant Zaporoghian. It

*Frankistan—land of the Franks, now Europe.

was, in fact, very much like the sentry boxes he had seen at Moscow.

"Well, brothers," he growled, "it is clear that this fellow is mad. And it is a sin to draw weapon on a witless wight."

Khlit, who had been watching the keeper of the tower, reined forward and took the leather pouch from the serf, shaking out a single silver coin.

"*Hai,*" he said, "the rider who passed before us has paid tribute. You of the tower, tell me what he was like, this rider."

The deep voice of the old *ataman* stirred the wells of speech in the keeper.

"*V zid.*"

"A Jew!" Ayub chuckled. "No blood is to be seen on the snow and so this Dog-face is liar as well as mad-man, because it is well known that a Jew will not part with silver without shedding tears of blood—"

"What master do you serve?" Khlit asked the serf.

"Erlik Khan."

The Cossacks exchanged glances. The name was not Muscovite; in fact it had a Tatar ring and meant Lord of the Dead.

"And where is he?" asked Ayub, amused.

"Where else but in his hall of Tor?" The keeper of the tower having retrieved his ruble, still held out the pouch expectantly.

"In *Pèristàn*—in fairyland mayhap," smiled Kirdy, breathing on chilled fingers.

"Nay, good sir," the serf made answer literally, "in the forest."

"What forest?" Khlit perceived that the stranger was capable of explaining only one fact at a time.

"Where else but to the north, uncle, an hour's ride?"

Here indeed a dark line of timber stretched along the horizon, barely visible in the wan light.

"And do Jews pay tribute to Erlik Khan who sits in this forest hall?" Ayub put in, to discover to what flights the mad brain of the toll would wander.

"Nay, all men pay, who pass along the *dorogou*. Give three silver rubles and no harm will overtake ye, my lords."

There was something stolid and sensible in his insistence that made the big Zaporoghian thoughtful.

"And if we do not pay?"

"Do ye not know? It will happen that ye will lose all things—gold, horses, weapons—when the riders of Erlik Khan overtake ye."

"Come!" said Khlit, gathering up his reins.

The tower would not shelter all of them, not to mention the horses. So he pressed on at a trot over the trail broken by the Jew, without further thought of toll or toll gatherer.

Close at his heels Ayub was muttering to himself.

"Aye, I mind the place now. Here between the rivers it was, in another age. A great duke built himself a hall as great, and filled it with men-at-arms. They had long swords, those *pani*—perhaps even as long as mine. That was before the name of the Lord Christ was known in this land—"

He paused to ransack his memory and stare again at the darkness in the north.

"Well, brothers, here's the tale. This duke being a dour man crucified a priest or stewed him in a caldron. I think the priest had built him a church near the hall. No matter—as soon as life left the priest and his lungs fell in, the hall of the pagan duke, with every soul in it, sank beneath the earth. And there it has been ever since. Only at times the bell that the priest put in his church tower is heard chiming, down there beneath. That's all true, brothers, because otherwise how could bells be heard in such a place as this?"

Reaching over his shoulder he touched the cross on the pommel of his sword. Khlit listened with only half an ear, because Ayub was superstitious to the marrow of his big bones. Khlit cared neither one way or the other—he had seen magicians, it is true, but they had died like human beings.

As for Kirdy, that youngster hailed from the desert where *ghils* were known to take human form and slay unwary riders. He believed that the scions of *Pèristàn* were thick upon the earth but he feared them not a jot.

ROUNDING a rocky hillock, they came upon the Jew, a shivering figure bundled up in seemingly limitless wrappings, topped by an enormously long woolen cap. On the rump of his weary pony rested a heavy bundle that clattered when the horse stumbled.

"*Ai-ee,* most noble *pani,*" cried he the instant he set eyes on them, "I have nothing upon me but some dirty garments—not a kopek, not a single *dinar.* This horse is

broken in the wind—not fit for such illustrious knights to trouble themselves about, I swear—"

"How are you called, Jew?" growled Khlit.

"Shmel is my name, brave Cossacks—Zaporoghians, I swear by all that is holy! Surely in all the world such noble lords were never before seen! I thank the fortune that sends such splendid warriors and not brigands who would strip me like a peeled turnip. Not that I have aught of value—"

Even while he spoke he kept an arm upon the bundle, and his keen, dark eyes were mirrors of his fear.

"Shmel, do you know this trail? Is there a tavern near at hand?"

The Jew drew his shoulders up to his ears and shook his head so that the tip of his long cap danced about like a wayward imp. There was, he swore, not so much as a hut on the trail this side the river Don.

"Then whither do you draw your reins, jackal?"

Shmel burst into a torrent of self-pity. A storm was threatening—the noble lords must know that—and his pony had gone lame. He had intended to camp on the Don but now that was out of the question. It was cold—he did not know what he would do.

In fact the bitter wind was whipping up tiny spirals of the fine snow. Some where the sun had set, and the air was growing chill. The Cossacks availed themselves of the last of the gray twilight to make camp in the lee of the rocky eminence, gathering the dry tops of the bushes and the débris of a dead oak, clearing a space for a fire. They took off the saddles and the experienced ponies began to dig with their hoofs to get at the grass under the snow.

Khlit kindled flame and started a small fire over which Kirdy roasted a quarter of lamb while Ayub heated brandy in a small pot that he always carried. They had slept out a night's storm before this, and if a *buran*—a long blizzard should catch them here they could always gain the shelter of the woods an hour's ride distant.

Torn between discomfort and fear of the Cossacks, Shmel lingered on the outskirts of the fire after tethering his horse, dining on some indistinguishable food that he drew out of a bag a fistful at a time covertly. When he saw them lie back on the saddle-cloths and light their pipes, he ventured to draw near and warm himself, his bundle in his arms.

This brought him again to the attention of Ayub who had been discoursing on the village that had been buried under the earth.

"*Hi, zida!* How came you to part with a ruble to the mad beggar in the tower? Is he your brother?"

"Nay, noble lord, he is the toll gatherer. In summer there are many to take the toll—a whole regiment of armed men. That is when merchants pass over this road. Now that the Volga is frozen few come this way."

In the midst of a cavernous yawn the big Zaporoghian grunted and terrified Shmel by frowning.

"You lie, you dog! If you do not tell the truth I will beat you. Who takes toll on the snow road?"

He had no intention of beating Shmel, but he knew the best way to get at what puzzled him.

"*Ekh panzirniky!*" The Jew glanced appealingly at Kirdy who seemed to be the mildest of the three. "No doubt you are mighty lords in the Siech or somewhere, but it is evident that you are strangers here. Do you not know that Erlik Khan is master of Tor? He sits in the castle back yonder in the forest and a hundred of the very finest warriors eat at his table from heavy silver plates. Aye, he has more slaves than I have ko— than a dog has fleas."

"In that case why are you shivering here in the steppe instead of toasting your toes in this castle—Tor?"

Shmel smiled at them all uneasily and took off his long hat, disclosing the black skull cap beneath.

"No one takes the road to Tor who is not a captive."

"Why not?"

"Because Erlik Khan is a *koldun*."

"A magician? —— take you, Shmel. No magician was ever served by knights and slaves."

"*Ai-ee!* Erlik Khan is not as others. He is more to be feared even than a Zaporoghian. By spells he draws warriors to him and once they have dwelt in Tor they have no desire to go elsewhere. May I burn if that is a lie. He has white eyes that can see at night. At his table a drink is served—a drink that renders his warriors braver than other men."

"Have you ever seen his castle?"

Again Shmel hunched his thin shoulders and smiled.

"Am I a *litzar*—a noble knight? Nay, I have seen his riders. Such horses were never known before—"

"Is Erlik Khan a Tatar?"

"No more than a Muscovite or Frank. Some say he is a Persian and can turn himself into the semblance of a beautiful woman—others hold he is a dwarf."

Ayub crossed himself and glanced at his companions—at Khlit who was dozing close to the fire and the boy who was polishing the bright, bluish blade of the curved sword, the gift of his grandsire. And then the hair stirred on his scalp, under the stout Cossack cap.

From near at hand came the sound of a bell—clearly chiming above the whisper of the wind and the snuffling of the horses. More and more loudly it tolled, until Ayub could have sworn that a church must be within musket shot of them.

SNOW was falling, the first white flakes rushing out of the upper darkness into the circle of firelight. The voice of the wind became strident. Kirdy asked if they should not saddle up and seek the protection of the wood. But Ayub, seizing the pot of warm brandy, and emptying the last of it down his throat, shook his head.

"Look here, *kounaks*. First a serf, a very animal, dares to out-face three warriors; then a Jew gives a silver coin without being compelled. And now a bell tolls, under the earth, as —— lives. Here be three miracles, and yonder wood is a *prokliatoe miesto*—an unhallowed spot."

"Nay, the wind is apt to twist sounds, making them seem far and then near," put in Kirdy.

"The serf," growled Khlit, "was not mad. He was sure that he would not be harmed. And the Jew was sure that he would be harmed if he did not pay."

"And the bell?" demanded the Zaporoghian doubtfully.

Khlit mused for a moment.

"*Hai*, it must be in the tower."

"Oh! Noble lords!"

From his corner under the rocks Shmel sprang up in sudden consternation.

"Did you *refuse to pay toll?*" He read their faces at once and groaned, clutching at his long ear-locks that projected from under the skull cap. "What a pity. What a splendid ermine coat the young warrior wears! I would have given thirty shekels of full weight for it. And that belt, surely it must be six feet in length and would make two with a little cutting."

He was staring at Ayub's girdle, a matter of some pride to the Zaporoghian, being gold embroidered on damask and sewn with pearls. He even looked at their boots, of red and green morocco, with high silver heels, shaking his head the while.

"What do you mean, Jew?"

"It is a pity that such noble garments should go to the men of Tor. Always when toll is not paid on this road, men are slain. That is the law of Erlik Khan. Put on your saddles, my lords, and ply your whips. Go—go at once. Already it is long since the bell tolled."

Irresolutely Ayub rose, certain now that Shmel was speaking the truth and fearing greatly the invisible powers of Tor. But Khlit who had been looking beyond the light of the fire spoke up gruffly.

"The clouds are breaking and the wind is going down. Devil or brigand, we will not show him our backs."

Shmel, who was thinking of himself, wrung his hands, went off to hide his precious bundle, and ran back to argue with the old warrior.

"By all that is holy, the *ataman* is brave as a lion; yet in what way can he strive against a magician? The law of Erlik Khan has been broken. Always he leads forth his riders, because if he did not attend to it, the law would not be obeyed and he would not be wealthy as a baron from the toll money. *Ekh*, of what use are your weapons?"

"Enough!" Khlit stowed his short clay pipe carefully in his belt. "Enough of words. In this snow men can not find us. If the people of Tor be spirits and not men, what would it avail us to mount and take the road again?"

This silenced Ayub who went and squatted by the glowing embers that sizzled as the damp drift struck them. Around the dying fire the three Cossacks clustered, turning up the high collars of their *svitkas*, setting their backs to the wind. Their dark faces, thoughtful and expectant, fascinated Shmel who could not refrain from estimating the many yards of wool and fur in the Zaporoghian's gigantic garments. Every now and then he shook his head, exclaiming:

"A pity. Such a notable sword!"

He could not understand why the Cossacks had not paid toll to Erlik Khan; nor could the warriors comprehend why the Jew was shivering, although by his own account his skin was safe enough.

When, somewhere overhead, the sky lightened and wan moonlight struck through the falling snow, Khlit reached out with his foot and covered the last smoking embers. Kirdy lifted his head, turning it slowly from side to side; then he rose and glided away without a sound to where the ponies were pawing and crunching at the dead grass. Ayub reached over his shoulder and eased the five foot broadsword from its sheath, to the annoyance of Shmel who perceived something vaguely alarming in the movements of the warriors. He noticed that the horses made no more noise.

"Shmel," whispered Ayub hoarsely, "if a sound comes out of your body you will no longer carry your pack—you will find yourself on the road to purgatory and you will be carrying your head."

Holding it in one hand, he swung the tip of the great sword under Shmel's chin, and the little merchant began to shiver more violently than ever. All his senses became acute, and his heart began to pound against the bottom of his throat. And he began to hear other things than the whistle of the wind.

Not far away a horse snorted, and a bit jangled. In another direction iron clanked dully; then a voice called out and another answered. The Cossacks, outlined in the silvery glow from the sky, peered from right to left without moving from where they squatted.

A horse stumbled and a curse rang out clearly; saddles creaked—beyond the white, transparent curtain of the snow shadowy objects moved.

A greater fear drove from the agitated mind of the Jew the memory of the sword blade hovering near his throat.

"Oh!" he screamed. "Noble riders of Erlik Khan, I have paid the piece of silver. I have—"

He yelled frantically and fell over backward as Ayub lashed at him savagely. Then, although he was unharmed, he continued to groan, until out of the drifting curtain horsemen appeared.

They were powerful men on black horses, and they wore chain armor covered by leather cloaks. It seemed to Shmel as if they filled the whole steppe. One of them laughed and spurred at Ayub who rose to meet him, heaving up the broadsword. The rider half turned and struck down with a scimitar. Ayub stepped aside and the man's laugh ended in a gasp as his ribs were crushed in by the impact of the long blade that shattered his light shield and smashed the iron links of his armor.

"*Ai-ee!*" wailed Shmel.

OTHER horsemen pressed up, shouting, and he heard the clang of steel upon steel. Sparks sprang up from the huddle of shadows. Then two pistols bellowed together, a man cried out hoarsely, and when the dark smoke cleared away Shmel could no longer see the three Cossacks. Instead the riders plunged here and there in the drifts, thrusting up with their lances and shouting.

It became apparent to Shmel that the fight was by no means ended. He peered down, and then up, and saw Ayub's bulk on the summit of the ten foot boulders that had given them shelter against the wind. They had abandoned their horses and taken to the ridge of rock, holding it against the onset of the horsemen.

Shmel was knocked hither and yon by the plunging ponies, and he breathed a prayer of relief when the clashing of weapons ceased and a clear high voice cried out in the drifting snow:

"Yield, *Kosaki*—we have bows."

Instantly Kirdy responded from above.

"And we have swords. The Wolf does not yield—the White Falcon does not yield to any man."

A moment of silence and the voice proclaimed, vibrant with mirth:

"What cares Erlik Khan for swords? Nay, are you truly the Cossack twain, Khlit and Kirdy?"

Shmel, protecting his eyes from the drift with his hand, peered at the speaker and saw something that gave him no comfort—a rider no more than half the stature of the Cossacks, sitting a huge white horse. A warrior, apparently no larger than a child, wearing a silver helmet and bearing upon his back a pair of eagle's wings, that closed and opened when the rider moved.

"*Sokol moi ridniy*" mocked the voice. "Falcon, my dear, by what token are you Kirdy?"

"Count your empty saddles and ask again," responded that youngster grimly.

Other horsemen reined up to the winged rider and Shmel heard their low whispers urging that a rush be made upon the three wanderers. But the leader shook off the whisperers impatiently and urged the white horse closer to the rocks, until its steaming breath beat against the neck of Shmel who dared not move. No slightest attention was paid him.

Leaning upon his broadsword, Ayub was clearly to be seen, but the winged rider stared at Kirdy, standing a little apart in his white ermine *svitka*, the curved sword in his hand.

"Cossacks," cried the chieftain of the horsemen, "you have spoiled three of my warriors. I shall take you with me to Tor in their stead."

"Are you he called Erlik Khan?" Khlit's deep voice questioned.

"Aye, so."

Shmel groaned and mustered courage to look over his shoulder. The long cloak hid the figure of the chieftain, as the nasal piece, and bars running down from the light silver bascinet, hid his features. But in the face of the master of Tor there was a pallor and a strangeness that surprized Shmel. The rider's eyes were closed.

"Yield yourselves," he said softly, "to me, for I am a *koldun* and not a man."

"Nay," said Khlit and Kirdy together.

Again the winged chieftain laughed.

"Who shall say to me nay? I have need of you, Cossacks, and because of that need I will spare you. Yield not—keep your weapons. Ride with me to Tor."

In the silence of the three warriors there was no hint of consent. And the master of Tor seemed to understand their thoughts.

"Here is no treachery, my falcons. Erlik Khan pledges you safety of life and limb, and freedom to go hence again, if you will. If not, I will waste no more souls upon your weapons but will drive off your horses—even this nag of the Jew's—and then you may face the storm on foot. *Ohai*, upon the next day or the next I will ride again forth to look at your bodies, stiff and dark."

So proclaimed Erlik Khan, looking at the silent Kirdy. But it was Khlit who stepped forward to peer at the winged rider.

"Draw back then, Erlik Khan," he growled, "until we are in the saddle. We will sheathe our weapons. Look to yours."

Only Shmel heard the amused laugh of the winged rider, as the white horse wheeled away through the veil of snow and the others followed. He was not surprized, then, that the Cossacks should leap down and fling their saddles on the ponies that had remained as they had been trained to do where they had been grazing. He knew that such warriors dreaded nothing so much as to be left afoot. And if the storm developed into a blizzard they were indeed lost, dismounted in the steppe.

At once the riders from Tor closed in again, their swords sheathed, their bows in the cases. A word of command was spoken and the Cossacks trotted off with them, leaving Shmel staring at three bodies already whitening under the falling flakes.

He ran to the fire and found it beyond repair. The moon was no longer visible.

The wind was eating into his very bones, and he was torn by a threefold fear—dread of the dead men, of the cold, and of the warriors. With numbed fingers, he roped his bundle to his saddle and set out, in a kind of dogged desperation, on the broad track left by the riders of Tor.

II

Strength bends a cross-bow with ease; but only Wisdom knows the moment to release the trigger.
—Maxims of Sun Tsu.

A GREAT fire roared upon the hearth of Erlik Khan. Candles gleamed on the pine tables of the long, low hall. And serfs hurried hither and yon bearing platters of wild boar flesh, ducks and sturgeon, to feed the warriors who crowded the benches and laughed at sight of steaming food and fragrant wine.

Although the tables were bare wood, the dishes were silver and of massive weight; the goblets and pitchers of the wine service were gold, and the wines themselves—*gorilka*, brandy, white spirits, spiced red vintages from the South. The log walls, cemented with mud and clay, were concealed by draperies of Chinese silk.

On one side of the fireplace was a stand of falcons—small peregrine falcons resting on rings and the great brown *bouragut* or golden eagles used for deer and wolves. On the other side, brightly lighted, stood a raised space filled with a teak table and Venetian chairs of ebony inlaid with ivory.

This was the *krasnoi miesto*, the honored guests' place, and here at ease sat the three Cossacks and the two captains of Erlik Khan.

Save for these five no one in the hall wore any weapon, except the girdle knife they used to cut meat. Such was the law of Erlik Khan.

Swords, pistols and battle bludgeons had been left in the quarters of the warriors on either side the hall. So, too, they had stripped them of steel shirts and breast plates. The serfs of course carried no arms.

Ayub had noticed this at once, and had seen that only one door beside the chimney opened upon the guest dais. Weapon in hand the three Cossacks could have inflicted bitter harm on the men of Tor if attacked. He placed himself so that he could watch the narrow door at his side, and loosed the broadsword, laying it against the table within reach—convinced that, for the moment at least, no treachery was intended.

Moreover, the officers of the khan filled him with curiosity rather than misgivings. One, a tall man, his sallow face clean-shaven, would drink no wine. His garments were—to Ayub's thinking—outlandish, being black velvet, with white lace at the collar and cuffs.

"I am called," said the tall captain, "Giovanni, at your service, my lords. I am of Genoa."

His eyes, amber-colored, dwelt on Ayub reflectively as he leaned forward to breathe deeply of the pungent incense.

"Genoa?" Ayub frowned. "Where on the Volga is that?"

The tall captain did not smile. Having appraised the big Zaporoghian he glanced at Khlit.

"It is a city in Frankistan where—no matter, my lords. Permit me of your courtesy—which of you is leader?"

When Ayub would have answered that Khlit, a *koshevoi ataman* of the Cossacks, was assuredly their leader, the old warrior forestalled him.

"The White Falcon is our *hetman*. We twain are no more than wanderers, journeying in his company."

Ayub gaped and would have denied this, if Khlit had not touched his knee under the table. Messer Giovanni seemed to be in two minds about this, but he bowed and waved a slender hand toward his companion.

"Call him Jean, messers. He also is a wanderer, from France."

Jean the Frenchman lifted his goblet to the three with a smile. A short man, too stout perhaps—as one who has fared well after long starvation—his red cheeks, carefully trimmed beard, and moist dark eyes all bespoke good humor.

"*A toi, messieur!*"

"Pan Giovanni," said Kirdy, "surely you have rank, and more of a name?"

The Genoese glanced at the door and shrugged.

"Here, I am Giovanni, no more. For the rest, it is better to forget. You, messer, from this night will be known as the White Falcon."

He spoke in the clear, precise voice of one who knows his own mind and is accustomed to addressing inferiors. His words were softened by a careless courtesy, as if he were communing with himself, yet aware that others heard him.

"From this night?" Kirdy's dark brows drew together. "Nay, we shall not hang our saddles for long in the stables of Tor."

"Ah. I fear me the storm will close the road for more than one night."

"And then?"

"Then, my White Falcon, you are quite free to mount and go—if you will."

When Ayub would have spoken out bluntly, Kirdy silenced him again with a touch. "And you, my lord," the youth asked quietly, "are you captive to Erlik Khan? Is the road open to you, or closed?"

And again Giovanni leaned forward to breathe deep of the fumes from the incense jar.

"I am free," he answered indifferently. "While the devils of frost hold the steppe, it is comfortable enough here. When the steppe is green again, I may go."

The behavior of the two captains from Frankistan puzzled the young Cossack, because they seemed eager and at the same time drowsy. The man called Jean was drinking heavily without livening up. His boots were wet, and Kirdy thought that he had been out on the night expedition, while his comrade had not left the shelter of the manor house, the *ousadba* of Erlik Khan.

"Look," exclaimed Ayub in what passed for a whisper with the giant, "at the horde."

Kirdy looked and became thoughtful. The men lining the tables of the great hall might have been gathered from the corners

of the earth. Broad-faced, clear-eyed Tatars sat beside slender Circassians from the southern mountains; red-cheeked, bearded Muscovites thumped on the pine boards for mead to refill their glasses and were cursed by thin, pallid Poles who were casting dice—and an unmistakable Turk snarled at a Greek who sprawled too near him. The place reeked of sweat-soaked sheepskins, of musk and oil and damp leather—silk-clad shoulders rubbed against rags, and the babble of voices in twenty languages drowned the rattle of goblets. Here were cropped ears and slit noses, and here too were manly heads scarred by battle strokes. Erlik Khan had acted wisely in forbidding weapons within the hall.

But, though he rose and searched the shadows with keen eyes, he saw no one who at all resembled the winged chieftain.

THEN the door upon the dais opened and the man called Jean sprang to his feet, with a low bow. Kirdy's hand dropped to the hilt of his sword, but shifted at once to his hip and he bowed in Cossack fashion, to the girdle, to hide the rush of blood that darkened his face. A young girl had entered bearing a tray upon which, in goblets of Venetian glass, wine sparkled.

Although her head came no higher than Kirdy's shoulder she appeared tall in her long sarafan of white silk bordered with dark sable—in the shining head-cover of silk embroidered with silver and emeralds, with two strings of glowing pearls reaching to her slender waist.

Unlike the Muscovite women, this girl bore no paint upon her cheeks. Nor did she need *kohl* to darken eyelids and brows that were blacker than the sable. The brilliance of her soft eyes and hair, the grave dignity of her bearing stirred the heart of the young Cossack who could appreciate both beauty and pride. At sight of him, her eyes half closed and she paused as though held back by an invisible hand. Ignoring Ayub and Khlit she presented her tray to Kirdy with a low-voiced welcome—

"*Volni Kosàki dom moi, vash dom.* Noble Cossacks, my house is your house."

In turn the five men took a goblet and bowed again, tossing off the wine. Jean's moist eyes sparkled with admiration, and Giovanni roused from his reverie. Ayub, speechless, held his breath and put down the fragile glass as if afraid it would break in his massive fingers.

In the lower hall the tumult dwindled to silence and men rose from their seats, shouting—

"*Boyarìshna*—the lady!"

She inclined her head and turned her back on the revellers to look again at Kirdy.

"Honored guest, a chamber has been prepared for the three heroes. Command Ibrahim, chief of the slaves, in all things. And," she added, almost in a whisper, "may no harm come to you under this roof."

"May harm never come near you, my lady!" Kirdy smiled, white teeth flashing under his dark, drooping mustache.

The firelight gleaming on his open, brown countenance, showed an instant boyish delight in the beauty of the woman who had tendered him the greeting of the mansion.

When Jean would have detained her with blundering words, she slipped past the Frenchman and Kirdy was at the door, bowing as she passed. He had a fleeting glimpse of soft lights and veiled women slaves, and the door was drawn shut. He heard an iron bar drop into place.

"Gentlemen," remarked Giovanni, "you have seen Ivga, the bride of Erlik Khan."

"*Messieurs*," cried Jean, "*la belle* Ivga—a diamond under the hoof of a wild boar. Come, let us drink again."

When they were seated, and Ibrahim—a Muhammadan *kayia*, in a black robe bearing the wand of his office—had brought them fresh wine, Giovanni picked up an empty goblet, watching the play of the flames in the colored glass.

"True—a diamond never loses its brilliance. Did you mark, messers, that the *boyarìshna* touches neither skin nor hair with color. She does not need to. I have been at Tor four years, and Ibrahim twice that time. Yet she was here before him. Do you think the *koldun* can preserve by his arts the beauty of this girl unmarred by time?"

"Aye, so," cried Ayub. "*He* did a harder thing than that when *he* found us in the storm, and brought this wild-cat, Kirdy to heel."

Giovanni shook his head.

"Nay, that was a simple matter. You neglected to pay toll, so the man at the post sounded the bell in the little tower. We heard it at the *ousadba* and Erlik Khan ordered Jean and thirty men-at-arms to

horse. From the serf on the trail they learned that your fire had been seen to the west, and so they searched until the Jew cried out and you were found."

"And brought here," added Kirdy, "why?"

It was Jean the Frenchman who answered, flinging back the long hair from his forehead.

"To fight!" And he added under his breath, "For Ivga, *la belle*."

With a glance at his comrade, Giovanni leaned back in his chair. "Hark ye, my lords to the tale:

"ERLIK KHAN had a strong following, as the Cossacks had seen—a hundred and twenty men-at-arms. The serfs of Tor were as numerous, and the *ousadba* lacked neither powder nor bullets. From the Don to the Volga, Erlik Khan was the over-lord; his wealth was beyond counting, his word was law.

"Only one man dared to stand against him, to mock at the toll payment, and to scatter the toll gatherers of Tor with the sword. This man, in his way, was as greatly feared as Erlik Khan. He was Skal, chief of the Volga pirates.

"A mighty man with his hands was Skal. His favorite weapon an iron mace studded with massive steel points; the pirate boasted that he was invincible in single combat and few knights denied that his boast was true.

"While Erlik Khan lurked in his forest, secure in his own peculiar powers, Skal sailed the river with his *burlaki*, pillaging the ships of merchants, selling his captives as slaves to the Moslems, slaying as a panther strikes. Around him gathered the outlaws of the frontier, men who had been hunted out of hope. And they were many.

"The Volga was his, between the Kama and the portage and the river-men had joined his bands; on the boats that came out of Asia he levied toll as Erlik Khan did on the trail between the rivers. One day Skal swore in a drunken humor that he would pass over the portage without paying silver to Tor, and in due course he came striding along the trail, a mob at his heels, roaring the song of the Volga *burlaki*.

"Fate ordained that on that particular day Ivga the wife of Erlik Khan should be hunting a stag, and that Skal should meet her face to face on the trail. There were Tatars with her, who could use their bows, and she was in the saddle of a swift-footed pony. So she escaped the hands of Skal and his Volga men, but the pirate had looked into her eyes and vowed that when winter came he would seek out the lair of Erlik Khan and burn his *ousadba* and carry off his wife Ivga."

So said Giovanni, in his dry, precise voice.

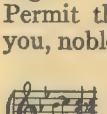
"And, messers, it is true that the brigand of the Volga has kept his word. He comes, Skal and his mob from the Kama through the forest. While the storm holds the steppe he must lie in camp. Then, in four days—perhaps three—he will be at Tor with the *burlaki*, river-men. Erlik Khan will not give up the *boyarìshna*. We will see whether the arts of the Khan will overthrow the power of Skal."

Kirdy nodded. In the world of the steppe, far from any Christian court, men must take service with such chieftains or lose lives and goods. For a thousand miles the Cossacks had seen no walled town; the authority of the Muscovite Tsar was here no more than a shadow, the Church a memory. The soil of Tor was still Asia.

"Skal," murmured Giovanni, "has performed the devil's mass. He fears neither man nor magician. Satan, it seems, looks after his own."

Again Kirdy nodded. He had heard tales of Skal's power, though the Volga pirates had not molested the Cossacks.

"Erlik Khan," went on the Genoese, "seeks the aid of your swords in the battle. He knows well that the White Falcon is worth fifty men-at-arms. No constraint is put upon you, sir knight, to serve him. You are free to draw your reins from Tor when you will; but it is my hope that you will draw your sword on behalf of the lady Ivga. Give me an answer on the morrow. Permit that I summon Ibrahim and wish you, nobles all, a good night."



STRETCHED luxuriously on the tiger skin of his pallet, Ayub surveyed the unwonted comforts of the guest chamber of Tor with an indulgent eye, and pulled the taboret bearing a goblet of spiced wine nearer to his hand. He admired the soft carpets of Bokhara and the damask hangings that covered the whitewashed walls, and the collection of yataghans and oriental daggers about the fireplace. After waiting upon them courteously Ibrahim the *kayia* had

withdrawn and Khlit had dropped solid bars into place upon the door. The narrow, high windows of stained glass shivered under the buffets of the rising wind, and the heavy fumes of incense swirled about Ayub's eyes in bewildering fashion.

"*Ekh*, brothers," he muttered, "I have slept within the walls of Bagchei Serai, and in the Kremyl itself, but this place is as fine as any. The wine goes to the head at once, there's gold and silver and slaves enough for a palace, and nothing's grudged. Only one thing is lacking—no holy pictures anywhere, not even an ikon in the guest room."

Kirdy glanced up in his quiet way. It was true. The walls, save for the weapons and hangings, were bare. He had not seen a priest in the throng in the hall.

"As for the wine," said Khlit suddenly, in Tatar, "I have tasted its like before now in the hills of Mazanderan. It is tainted with *bhang*."

"And in the braziers," added Kirdy, sniffing, "hemp is burning."

A delicious drowsiness was enveloping the big Zaporoghian; he pulled off his boots and contemplated them with pleasure, thinking that they had never looked so bright and red before.

"Well, brothers," rumbled Ayub, wrapping the tiger's paws about his big body, "what are we to do? We are in a wizard's *ousadba*, no help for that. I'd rather go against Skal than Erlik Khan. That's the truth. We'll have hard work with the pirates, but there are worse things than that—" he yawned heavily and fell asleep almost with the last word.

Khlit stared at the fire in silence for a long time. Then he sighed, shook himself and placed his boots under his head for a pillow. His eyes closed as if in spite of his will.

"Kirdy," he said, "little *bogatyr*, my eyes are old—they can not see in the night. There is darkness here and our way is not clear. Ayub has a stout hand but a weak wit. You must choose the road we will take, and answer the people of Tor."

Turning on his side, he coughed and went to sleep. Left to his own devices, the young warrior picked up the incense stand and tossed it into the fire. At the court of the Moghul of Ind he had seen the effects of burning hemp.

Listening to the heavy breathing of the older men, he paced up and down the guest chamber. To be penned within solid walls always made him restless, and this night the wind was howling around the corners like a fiend—

At one of the walls he stopped, his ear pressed against the damask. Above the roar of the storm and the crackling of the flames, he heard a girl's voice clear as the chime of the bell over the frozen steppe—

It was Ivga, singing to a balalaika:

> "*Ai-a*—gallop away
> From the earth, to the threshold of day!'
> Away! Turn again,
> O my warrior, from the earth and its men."

KIRDY was afoot early the next morning, before sun-rise. The sky had cleared and the old moon was a gray wisp in the west; the breath of the forest was bitter cold and snow had drifted waist high. He reflected that they would have fared badly in the open steppe that night, and he wondered how Shmel had managed to weather the storm, until he came face to face with the Jew at the stockade gate.

"The forehead—the forehead to you, noble lord. See, here are fine flints and bullet molds—belt buckles and powder flasks of the newest fashion. I have all things a noble knight can desire for an expedition. Or does your honor wish ribbons to adorn a pretty girl's shoulder? You will not buy them cheaper anywhere. And it's a fact that I have a certain powder, got from a wise woman on the Kama, that, when mixed with the wine a maiden drinks will inspire her with everlasting love for the noble lord—"

"What price do you set on your own hide, Shmel? If Erlik Khan finds you, unbidden, within his gate—" Kirdy smiled a little at the thought of the merchant selling love potions in the mansion of a magician.

The Jew had arranged a rude stall out of the wrappings of his bundle and a plank or two and was setting out an array of goods.

"Isn't it true that the warriors of Tor are setting out on an expedition, your magnificence? At such times they must need flints and powder."

"You have long ears—beware lest Erlik Khan crop them!"

Shmel wriggled and ran around the stall to grasp the Cossack's long coat.

"Harken, young lord! Is it not true that Erlik Khan has shown you honor? Take

me under your protection, O most illustrious of chieftains, and I will repay you well. Before God, I know that which will open your eyes. Last night on the steppe I saw—"

But Kirdy, impatient of such talk, moved away toward the gate. He could not understand the merchant who had no thought for his own honor, yet would risk torture for the sake of selling his trinkets at many times the price he had paid for them.

As for Shmel, he lifted his hands in amazement at the man who would not stop to listen to a message that might mean life or death to him. He watched the warrior stride through the snow to the gate, where the Tatar guards bent the forehead to him respectfully. Kirdy said nothing to them but surveyed the defenses of Tor with a critical eye.

The *ousadba* was strong—the outer palisade twelve feet in height, of heavy fir logs sunk upright in the ground, surrounded even the low thatched stables and serfs' quarters. The upper ends of the logs were sharpened to a long point and a narrow platform on the inner side permitted the defenders to stand and shoot down over the top. At the corners towers projected beyond the line of the palisade. These had narrow loop-holes through which the defenders could shoot down assailants that ran to the foot of the stockade. And for an arrow's flight outside, the fringe of the forest had been cleared away.

The inclosure was more than a castle—it was a dominion within walls. A granary and meat house occupied the side across from the stables and cattle sheds; behind the manor house a wind-mill creaked irresolutely, and the *ousadba* itself, built of squared logs chinked with clay, could have stood a siege.

Covered ways led from it to the outbuildings, so that the serfs could come and go, no matter how deep the snow lay in the inclosure, and a square tower with a roofed-in summit rose out of the mass of the structure, like the head of a serpent, raised to strike from its coils.

Since the *ousadba* stood on the crest of a long slope, the tower must overlook the countryside. Probably in the first place it had been one of the strongholds built by the Tatars of Tamerlane, generations ago. Was Erlik Khan a Tatar?

Thoughtfully, Kirdy made his way to the stables, rubbed down and watered the three shaggy ponies of the Cossacks and gave them their oats. One had lost its leather shoe on the off fore-foot and this pony Kirdy led to the shed where he had seen thick ox-hides and tools. Taking off his *svitka* he set to work cutting a strip that was almost as hard as iron, shaping it to the horse's hoof, talking to the beast under his breath as he worked, taking no heed of the damage done his clothing.

While he was pounding in the nails a shadow darkened the shed and he glanced over his shoulder. Ivga, wrapped in a marten skin *khalat*, stood watching him, Ibrahim beside her.

"O honored guest," she said quickly, "the stable knaves will attend to your horse. Giovanni awaits you at breakfast."

Kirdy, his mouth full of nails, shook his head. The Cossacks were accustomed to look to saddle girths and hoofs themselves—a loose girth or snow balling in a pony's hoof and hardening to ice might mean a fall or a lame mount at a critical moment.

Turning to Ibrahim the mistress of Tor ordered him to explain to the captain Giovanni that Kirdy would join the others presently. The *kayia* hesitated, then took himself off.

"Erlik Khan has made a prophecy!" Ivga cried softly. "Last night he talked with the *vourdalaks* of the storm. He said to me, 'The three warriors will abide at Tor; yet the hour of their going will be terrible. Then the wolves will come out of the forest and the vultures will darken the sky.'"

Kirdy drove a last nail and released the pony, which trotted off to its stall.

"Eh, *boyarìshna*," he said, "what do you say?"

"I?" That the Cossack should spare her a thought seemed to astonish the girl. Her eyes brightened and the color flooded her cheeks.

"I would have you—stay."

"Surely, my lady, Erlik Khan can beat off the Volga men."

"He fears Skal. He seeks the aid of your swords."

His eyes on hers, the young hero mused.

"And yet the prophecy of the *koldun* foretells evil out of our visit."

"Evil?" Her lips trembled. "Nay Tor itself is evil. In all the manor you will not find the cross of God. Nay, they will not

give me one little image to wear over my heart."

Hands clasped upon her throat, her dark eyes grief stricken, she stirred the spirit of the young Cossack to its depths.

"Eh, *boyarìshna*, how is that to be endured? Is Erlik Khan truly a magician with powers more than human?"

She nodded mutely.

"It is easier to enter the gate of Tor than to leave. But the face of Erlik Khan you will not see, unless—" she caught her breath as if beholding something unexpected and welcome. "Nay, he does not like to be seen because he is no more than half a man. He is no larger than a child."

Kirdy thought of the winged rider; if Erlik Khan were in truth small in body, he had the clear voice and quick wit of a leader of men.

"Yet he commands his warriors when they are mounted for war."

"Aye, in his cloak and armor he will do so, because in the saddle—"

"He bears himself well."

"And in the *ousadba* he keeps to his own chambers, which are in the *vyzga*, the tower. My room is next to his and at all hours he comes to me with orders or questions, or summons Ibrahim, who bears his wishes to the captains of the men-at-arms."

"And you are his wife?" asked the blunt Kirdy.

"Aye, so. Ten years ago when I was a child I was taken captive on the road between the rivers. My father, who was on his way from Moscow to Astrakhan, was slain by the robbers. Because I was fair they let me live among the women and in time Erlik Khan made me his wife."

"*Ekh*," Kirdy mused aloud, "I would like well to see this magician."

She looked at him, wide-eyed.

"You do not fear him?"

"Not in his hall nor on the steppe."

"And you would see his face?"

"Aye."

She bent her head in thought, her hands still clasped against the white throat that nestled in the furs.

"To-night, late, when the hall is quiet, come into the passage by the guest room. At the far end I will be, and if Erlik Khan is sleeping you may see his face."

Kirdy smiled, bending closer to catch her whispered words. "Why should he sleep? Let him await me in the *vyzga* with candles."

"That he would never do. Is it the tower at night you fear?"

The young Cossack shook his head impatiently, and she added swiftly—

"Then it is agreed."

AT THE door of the *ousadba* he left her and was hastening to the hall when a growling voice arrested him in his stride. Turning aside into the guest room he found Khlit holding Ayub down upon the pallet by his shoulders. The big Zaporoghian was cursing and reaching vainly for his sword, the veins knotted on his forehead, his eyes staring.

"You dog-brother," he roared at Kirdy, "where were you at sun-up? 'Tis not your fault I am here, and not paring the devil's hoofs. Brothers, let us to saddle! Wolves may fare well in this place but the souls will go out of men. Khlit, you old *chakali* let me gird on my sword."

Evidently he was still the worse for wine, and frightened which was unusual.

"He's been dreaming of Satan," muttered Khlit, thrusting his knee down on the Zaporoghian's throat.

"*Ugh-a!* Out of the way! If I was dreaming then you are a bath-house tender. As God lives, I had wakened—my eyes were open and I was looking at the door because it was swinging slowly. Then in the dark passage I saw it, the *vourdalak*, the vampire. It was no bigger than a child, though its head was the size of mine. *Ugh*—take your fist out of my hair. By the good Saint Nicholas, its skin was white and shining, and its eyes glowed like fire. It was a hungry vampire, and I said to myself, 'It has carried off Kirdy and now comes looking for me!' As soon as I touched the cross on the hilt of my sword it vanished."

"Did you see this?" Kirdy asked Khlit.

The old warrior shook his head.

"I heard Ayub howl, and the fiend may have entered him, because now he is out of hand."

"Give him wine."

A pitcher of the spiced vintage tossed down his throat calmed the giant and Khlit allowed him to take his broadsword in his fist. He sighed and drew on his boots hastily. Although still confused in his wits he was by no means drunk, and he announced his intention of getting to horse and quitting Tor at once.

"Brothers," he said, "I will go against Skal and the Volga men, but I will not linger where vampires come in at daybreak."

"And you?" Khlit asked his grandson.

"I have decided, *ataman*. Cossack honor does not permit that we ride from Tor the day before it is besieged. I will draw my sword for the *boyarìshna*."

Ayub groaned and clutched his head. "And I will not stay. Ivga is fair as a lily, and I would like to cross swords with the Volga chieftain—"

"So you will, Ayub," Kirdy assured him. "One night and no more we will abide at Tor."

"How—"

"Giovanni awaits me. I must not keep him."

Khlit looked after the young warrior anxiously. There were questions he would have liked to ask, and he would have warned the White Falcon not to put himself under the orders of a captain of Tor; but Kirdy, he saw, had decided what to do and Khlit had no love of advice, given or offered.

"I did not dream, old Wolf," Ayub muttered. "It is the truth that the *vourdalak* turned his eyes on me and looked right through me."

"Enough!" said Khlit curtly.

Yet in his thoughts he compared the dwarf that Ayub had seen in the first light of that day with the rider who wore wings and called himself Erlik Khan. It was quite possible that the Khan had looked into their room after Kirdy had left it. If they were to stay and aid the people of Tor, sooner or later they must speak with the master of the house. And there was Ivga. Khlit suspected that if the mistress of Tor had not been beautiful Kirdy would not have decided to stay. And this troubled him.

At the table by the fireplace Kirdy found Giovanni alone, and the Genoese raised his brows at sight of the young Cossack.

"I had looked for your comrades, my lord."

"And they," Kirdy smiled, "have looked too long on the cup. I am here in their stead."

Giovanni had heard something of the uproar made by the Zaporoghian, and he nodded without comment. Jean the Frenchman, too, was the worse for wine, and many others. But Kirdy's eyes were clear, and his step assured.

"Your decision, my Cossack?"

"We will go against Skal, on one condition."

"And that?"

"We shall have command of the men-at-arms for Tor."

A moment's silence while the Genoese struggled with surprize. "Odd's life! You to command in Tor! I dare not bear such tidings to Erlik Khan. Have you taken leave of your wits?"

"Nay, Pan Giovanni, by this token. The old Cossack is a *koshevoi ataman*—they two have led thousands into battle; they will aid you, but will not serve under a —*koldun*."

"Erlik Khan is no simpleton when it comes to an affray, as you should know well."

Kirdy bowed his head, but answered with pride.

"If the magician is able to deal with Skal, let him do so. If he seeks our aid—"

"He asks it."

"Then we can not serve under a *koldun*."

A flush darkened the Italian's forehead, and his fingers twitched toward the rapier hilt at his side. "*Sant' Maria!* Such words are to be answered with steel. I serve under Erlik Khan!"

"Answer as you will," responded Kirdy calmly, "but think of the *boyarìshna*. We would keep her from the hands of Skal and his men. For Erlik Khan I care naught."

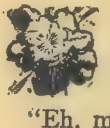
Giovanni's hand rose to the table irresolutely, and he smothered an oath.

"So soon? Jean is mad, by her beauty. He dreams of the lady Ivga and he is not the only one. They are all her slaves, the men of Tor."

"If they would guard her from Skal they must leave Tor and seek the Volga men in the forest."

This time Giovanni could smile.

"You Cossacks love horses overmuch. Leave Tor? Nay, it is clearly to be seen that you know little of warfare on the frontier, if you bid us leave the walls."



TO THIS Kirdy made no response, busying himself with the meat and barley cakes put before him by the serfs.

"Eh, my Cossack knight, I have seen a battle or two in my time. The walls of the stockade can not be pulled down, and Skal's horde will not be able to assault them in the

teeth of our muskets and pikes. The Volga *burlaki* are best at hand-to-hand fighting—yet you advise going to meet them in the forest where even your horses will be of little use."

Kirdy nodded, plying his knife with relish.

"And why?" persisted Giovanni.

"Because Skal would not come against Tor unless he could deal with your walls. He can."

"Pray, how?"

"With cannon."

This gave the Genoese food for contemplation. He had thought that the transport of cannon during the winter was impossible.

"Nay," the Cossack assured him, "among his baggage sleds Skal has two that bear brass guns, covered with furs."

Messer Giovanni permitted himself a smile.

"Eh, are you too a wizard—that you can see twenty miles through the forest?"

"Three days ago, my lord, we passed Skal and his train, turning into the forest from the Volga trail. I saw the cannon then and counted four hundred warriors, well armed. It needs not a wizard to prophesy that he will surround you in Tor. Then the cannon will growl and your gates will go down before your men can fire a shot from their muskets; then the *burlaki* will cry 'Up lads!' and will slash the lives out of you."

Messer Giovanni found no comfort in this. Biting his fingernails he stared at the table, with covert glances at the young warrior.

"*Matia Bogun!*" he whispered. "Four hundred! And cannon—the odds lie against us." Presently he roused, as if he saw his way clear. "Young sir, I deemed your years too few for such knowledge of war. Permit me to inquire how you would move against Skal?"

Kirdy shook his head.

"The Wolf has said; an *ataman* must not disclose his plan to his men."

"Ah. Hannibal was not more discreet. At least, confirm me in this—you are confident of victory in the forest?"

"Nay, only if God sends victory, we will overthrow the Volga men."

The swarthy face of the Genoese darkened and his fingers tapped rapidly on the table.

"A poor jest—it likes me not. Messer Kirdy, there is about you a taint of the stables and cow-sheds."

He filliped a scented handkerchief before his nostrils, staring openly at the garments of the young warrior, soiled in the morning's labor.

Now Kirdy had spoken quite seriously. He had thought out a way to attack Skal in the forest. Knowing something of the fighting qualities of the Volga pirates, he was not sure of the issue. God gave victory and defeat, when men had done their utmost.

"Enough of words," he smiled. "We Cossacks do not scorn horses—or swords."

"Or women," Giovanni added lightly, an dKirdy felt anger flash upon him suddenly.

"Death to you!" he cried, his hot temper flaring.

The thin nostrils of the Genoese expanded and he had gripped at his sword hilt, when a dark figure stepped silently from the door beside them and bowed with folded arms.

"*Effendim*," said Ibrahim, soft voiced, "Erlik Khan bids the falcon of the Cossacks command the men of Tor. He has heard your talk and he also bids the two lords of Frankistan keep their swords sheathed, according to his order."

During that day Kirdy did not open his lips again. Giovanni had postponed the sword duel until Kirdy should take his departure from the *ousadba*, and they waited for word from the Tatar riders who were searching for the Volga men in the forest. But the young warrior did not bother his head about Skal as yet.

He was puzzled by the strange behaviour of the people of Tor, the evil temper of Giovanni, the silence of Khlit and the savage ill-nature of Ayub who was enjoying the aftermath of his drinking bout. Usually the Zaporoghian was the best-natured of men. He thought more often of Ivga, pitying her plight and admiring her beauty. And above all things he wondered why in this manor house filled with costly objects, with furs and gold and all that men could desire, foreboding lay like a cloud upon the souls of its people.

When he watched the warriors in the hall he fancied that they moved about like men whose limbs were chained—as if their spirits were asleep. And this, he decided, must be some wizardry on the part of Erlik Khan.

He was glad that he would meet the Khan face to face that night.

III

When you go into battle—string your bows, temper your spear points, sharpen your swords, but pay no heed to the words of the soothsayers.
—Proverb of Old Cathay.

NEVER, to Kirdy's eyes, had the *boyarìshna* appeared more lovely than that night when she awaited him at the end of the passage, a candle dimmed by a night-shade in her hand. Her hair, dark as the mane of a black stallion, flooded her slender shoulders. It was pushed back from her smooth forehead and from it came a scent more elusive than dried rose leaves or the dust of jasmine petals. Her lips, parted in a half smile, gave him welcome in a voiceless whisper.

Kirdy, standing erect, his Cossack hat in his hand on one hip, his other hand on his sword hilt, bowed respectfully.

"Come," she breathed, her eyes seeking his.

She was indifferent to cold, heedless of the dark and the danger of that moment. To Kirdy she seemed as a *divchìna*, a maiden without fear or evil thought—one who went, candle in hand, to pray in some dim and deserted chapel, and at that instant he could not think of anything more to be desired than the lady Ivga.

They passed through her sleeping chamber, her light feet tripping over the soft silk carpets and white bearskins soundlessly. And the room itself gleamed with white damask hangings, even the canopy of the carved cedar bed. A gray wolfhound, Ivga's pet, raised its head but did not growl at the young Cossack. Only in the chamber Kirdy did not see any ikon or prayer stand and he remembered what she had said, that such things were not allowed her.

A narrow door set in a heavy log wall admitted them to a bare compartment without windows or hearth and Kirdy, who had an accurate sense of direction, thought that they were now within the base of the square tower. He looked around swiftly for other doors, but saw none—only rows of powder casks.

"The *koldun*," Ivga whispered, "lies asleep above us. If you find him terrible, make no sound. *You must not wake him.*"

She glanced up at him beseechingly, and Kirdy nodded understanding. Holding the candle close to her breast to shield it from the eddies of the outer wind that swept through cracks in the upper wall, Ivga ascended a narrow stair that ran around the walls and disappeared in the shadows far over his head, as a path clings to the side of a precipice.

The wind snatched at her light garments, causing the flame of the candle to sink to a pin-point and then leap up madly. Somewhere in the height above him timbers creaked, and he stopped instinctively.

Ivga laughed under her breath and passed through a small opening in the floor above, leaving him in near darkness. The wooden steps whined under his weight and he held his breath to listen—hearing nothing but the high whimper of the wind outside the *ousadba*. It needed courage to thrust his head through the aperture into the chamber of Erlik Khan, but Kirdy appeared beside Ivga so silently that she smiled approval and took his fingers in her warm hand.

Kirdy moved on his toes, so that his silver heels should not grate on the rough timbers. He was more than a little fearful for Ivga's sake—if the Khan should wake and see that she had brought an armed warrior to his side, there would indeed be terror and the *boyarìshna* must suffer. But above all things Kirdy felt the need of seeing the face of the winged rider who had offered him terms on the steppe. Otherwise how could he take command with Erlik Khan at his stirrup, when all their lives must be put to hazard in the forest?

His first glance assured him that the room behind him was empty, except for bundles of valuable furs piled in the corners. There were chests ranged around the wall, and he half glimpsed a ladder that must lead to the tower summit.

As quietly as he could he followed Ivga to the far side, where a shelter of hides had been arranged roughly on stacked spears, Tatar fashion, to shield a cot from the blasts of the outer air. One side—the side toward them—was open, and, bending over the cot Kirdy beheld a small figure curled up in a black bearskin.

The thing was no larger than a dwarf, and the head was shaggy as the bear's fell. The face that he saw in the glow from the shaded candle was colorless except for the blue

veins in the heavy brow—a pallid, twisted face, without vitality.

It was, in truth, a dwarf. An old man, judging by the gray streaks in the coarse black hair, and the lines about the closed eyes. Kirdy had seen such stunted beings at the court of kings and boyars—garbed in rags and Oriental finery, jesters whose pranks and sharp words caused their masters to laugh.

"Come," Ivga pressed close to his shoulder, her cheek brushing his mustache, to whisper almost inaudibly, "you have seen Erlik Khan, the *koldun*. He is restless, and if he should open his eyes—

She tugged gently at his fingers. Erlik Khan, in fact, was moving uneasily under the bearskin. Then Ivga bent her head swiftly and blew out the candle, drawing Kirdy to one side.

The dwarf had sighed and lifted his head. A square embrasure by the ladder admitted the moonlight into the tower, and by good fortune the silvery rays fell squarely upon the cot and the dwarf, so that Ivga and Kirdy stood in shadow.

As quickly as a snake coils when a step strikes the ground, the *koldun* turned, crouching, his short arms braced on the side of the pallet. He had seen or heard something that startled him. Powerless to prevent it, Kirdy noticed a thin wisp of smoke drift from the candle wick into the square of moonlight.

Kirdy's right hand gripped the ivory hilt of his sword suddenly. He could see the shaggy head of the dwarf distinctly and the eyes, now wide open. The pupils of the eyes shone in a peculiar fashion, and the Cossack, staring at them in fascination, knew that they were white.

His fingers closed around the cross on his sword hilt and his lips formed a prayer to the Father and Son. Erlik Khan did not quiver or shrink at this invocation, fearful to evil spirits. Instead, the translucent eyes roved around the chamber in a ghastly manner as if seeking in the shadows that which had aroused his anger.

"*Ai-al*" the girl breathed. "Strike with your sword before—strike now."

But Kirdy, intent on the dwarf, did not move.

"He sees us. Draw and strike while you have your strength."

A moment passed, and Kirdy bent his head until his lips touched Ivga's hair. "Nay, he sees us not. He is blind."

The woman beside him trembled with eagerness that was like a fever.

"Blind—yet he has the power of sight within him. His anger is growing. See!"

The head of the dwarf was moving from side to side, even while his eyes swept aimlessly from the floor to the ceiling; it seemed as if he had heard their light whispers above the creaking of the tower. His long teeth were visible through the tangle of his beard, and he resembled so much an animal drawing up its sinews to spring that Kirdy slipped the curved saber half-way from the scabbard. Ivga watched him with silent eagerness.

Kirdy knew that he could step forward and slash open the skull of the man on the pallet before Erlik Khan could harm him—unless the dwarf were indeed a *koldun* with power to shatter the steel blade. But the Cossack had named the Father and Son and the dwarf did not even spit, as a *koldun* might be expected to do.

Surely the master of Tor deserved death, because he had slain innocent men without cause. And with Erlik Khan dead, would not Ivga be freed from her tormentor? Still, he could not step forward and strike. He wondered if Erlik Khan had, in truth, cast a spell upon him.

Abruptly, he slapped the sword back, and the dwarf started as if stung, peering at the darkness in which the woman and the Cossack stood. Kirdy had realized that this was not the winged rider. The dwarf had a beard that hung nearly to his hips. Unless Erlik Khan could change his shape, like a witch—Kirdy, heedless of Ivga's impatience, fell to wondering.

"ERLIK KHAN," he said quietly, "by Ibrahim you named me *ataman* of the men of Tor, so that I might lead them against Skal. From your lips I would hear that promise."

The face of the dwarf changed instantly; the snarling intentness fell away, to be replaced by bewilderment. He squatted back in his lair, fingering his beard.

"Skal? Who is he? Nay, I am Erlik Khan. I speak with the *vourdalaks* of the storm—I ride the white horse of nights. What do you seek with me?"

Again came the woman's insistent whisper at his ear:

"He can appear like this if he wills. He is afraid of you. Come, let us go while we may."

But the young Cossack shook his head impatiently.

"Nay, grandfather, you lie. You did not ride the white stallion last night, or wear the armour with wings. Your voice is not *his*."

"Good youth, what are these words? Where is the *boyarìshna?* Who is near me?"

"The Cossack, the White Falcon. I have said that you lied."

Kirdy strode forward then and seated himself on the side of the pallet, pulling the dwarf forth from his lair of shadow by the beard. The old man was very uneasy and kept calling out for the *boyarìshna*, who, however, maintained utter silence.

"*Ekh batyùshka*—eh, grandfather, it was you who looked in at the Cossack Ayub, and raised the hair on his head."

Scrabbling at his beard, the dwarf tried to get beyond reach of the young warrior's hand.

"*Ai-trzeil* Noble sir, I meant no harm. How could I, when God has darkened my eyes? I heard one of the noble lords breathing like a horse and I opened the door to door to listen."

"And you listened at the door of the *krasnoi miesto* this morning while I talked with the captain Giovanni."

The old man mumbled and wriggled, swearing that this was not so.

"The hall is not a fit place for such as I. When other men behold me they go away—such is my ugliness. Only the *boyarìshna* is kind."

"Kind?"

"As a mother of saints. She has given me this bed and coverlet—"

A sudden movement on the part of Ivga made him lift his head and listen.

"That was like her step. Why do you not go away from me, cousin Cossack? Aye, Ivga brings me bread and at times a shank-bone of mutton. When she rides from the tower she only locks the lower door."

"And Ibrahim?"

"*Ai-trzeil* He binds me and beats me sometimes because he is a Muhammadan."

"Are you, grandfather?"

The dwarf shook his head vaguely.

"Do not mock me, cousin Cossack. I think you have come from afar. I do not make the five prayers, and I eat unclean meats."

"Nay, you are Erlik Khan!"

The twisted face brightened and the dwarf started to his feet.

"Aye, Erlik Khan they have named me. I listen to the *vourdalaks* flying about the tower. When the storm spirits cry out like dead souls, I dance. Hi, Cossack!"

In clumsy cowhide boots the dwarf began to caper on the echoing planks, grinning like the fiends he had invoked. He flung his short arms about.

"There are many dead souls in Tor. I hear them wailing, below." And he began to sing in a hoarse high voice, while Kirdy watched, grave-eyed, his chin on his hand. He could see clearly now, the white cataracts over the pupils of the old man's eyes, and the pallor that came from age and confinement.

"Enough!" he cried suddenly. "Back to your nest, little grandfather."

He felt a twinge of pity as the dwarf darted to the pallet and rolled up in the bearskin, like a dog that has been caught in some mischief and rushes to its corner to escape the wrath of its master. Then Kirdy went down the dark stair very quietly. He had seen Ivga slip away and he did not know what he might find below.

He had been born in the Gobi where the night has its tasks and struggles as well as the day, and he knew that he was alone in the lower chamber where the powder casks were stored. Soundlessly he moved to the door, and after listening a moment pushed it open.

The *boyarìshna* was sitting on a cushioned bench, near the fire, one hand on the neck of the wolfhound, her eyes on the face of the young warrior. He went to the hearth and gazed about the room, the blood warming his cheeks as he realized that it was Ivga's sleeping chamber, and that he was standing in his boots on a small silk prayer rug of Bokhara.

"This night," he said, "I sought for speech with Erlik Khan, and now the moment has come."

From under lowered lids she studied the lean face of the warrior, the thin nostrils, the wide, firm lips and the level brows, now darkened with anger. Kirdy was standing with his cap at his hip and his hand on his sword hilt as if facing an enemy.

And Ivga felt in her heart that she loved

the Cossack, even while she told herself she hated him.

"Aye," she said, in her clear young voice, "they named you well, White Falcon. Truly you have the eyes of a falcon. I *did* ride the white stallion last night, and wear the cape and helmet—but how did you know?"

"*Boyarìshna,* your voice is not like another's."

"Still, you were not sure until you talked with—the dwarf. Riding so, in the night, the men-at-arms knew me not. If they thought a woman led them, they would not obey."

"Not so—they worship you, my lady."

She looked up at him quickly.

"They may think so of Ivga, the captive-wife of Erlik Khan. But would they be loyal to Ivga, the rider of the white horse, the mistress of Tor?"

When Kirdy remained silent, she stared upon the fire musingly for a space and then tossed back the dark tangle of her hair as if casting off thongs that bound her.

"It's true, *bratik*—my brother. Your Cossacks would not follow a woman to battle. They think we are all witches."

A little smile touched her dark lips, though her eyes were somber.

"Harken, White Falcon—once I tricked you and lied to you. There is no Erlik Khan. In other years my father, journeying from Persia, was slain by a few bold robbers on this trail that leads from the Volga to the Don. All our servants except two were cut to pieces. I was brought to this *ousadba,* then a small hold. One of the two servants, Ibrahim, was able to put the white dust—*bhang*—into the flagon of wine the dog souls, the robbers, were drinking from that night. Their senses were dulled and some of them Ibrahim slew with his knife. He freed me, and I put on the mail and small helmet that I found in the plunder gathered by the outlaws. Those who survived were savage men without wit, and they thought that the dwarf, Erlik had got the better of them because he was a *koldun,* a wizard."

Kirdy nodded understanding. In appearance Erlik was awesome enough.

"Who was there to tell me what to do—I, a maiden untaught? Ibrahim would have gone back to the towns of Islam. But we were no more than three, and with my father's goods and the gold and weapons the robbers had got together in Tor. In Muscovy I had no friends. So we strengthened Tor, and in time other outlaws took refuge here. Knights, passing along the road between the rivers, chose to stay and serve me, and to them I said that the dwarf was truly a *koldun* and that I was his wife."

Her slender fingers caught in the shaggy coat of the wolfhound and she laughed, a chiming bell-note that caused the dog to lift its head to her knee.

"*Ai-al* At times the knights fought among themselves on my account, and a few prayed me to flee with them into the steppe. Why should I? There is a legend related of this place that once a pagan duke lived here with all his court. So did I set up my kingdom, and even the Tatars came to abide at my house, for dread of the *koldun,* Erlik Khan. I sent them here and there into the world, and they brought me tidings swiftly—so that men thought I had eyes and ears to perceive what came to pass in the steppe and the forest. Because I rode from the *ousadba* usually at night, they said that I could see in the dark, like a vampire."

"THE prophecy," said Kirdy thoughtfully, "you related to me in the stable—whence did it come?"

Ivga shook her dark head.

"My lord Cossack, it was from the lips of Erlik, the dwarf. He has a whim of strange sayings. 'When they ride forth from Tor,' he proclaimed, 'the wolves will come from the forest and the vultures from the sky.' "

"*Ekh na,* that may well be a true saying, if Skal comes against Tor. Tell me this, *boyarìshna:* we have made a bargain, that I was to have command over your men. I will release you from the bargain, if that is your desire—"

"And why, Sir Cossack?"

"Because if I command at Tor, all things must be in my hands. The Volga men are not hedgehogs—we can not play with them."

Ivga smiled suddenly and clapped her hands. Before she could summon him again the outer door opened and Ibrahim appeared, very much surprized at beholding the young warrior in the room of his mistress.

"Tell me, O *kayia,* what word has been brought by our riders."

Ibrahim made answer in Persian—

"*Ak Begum*—Flower Princess—the Tatars say that Skal is no more than two days' march distant."

Ivga dismissed the chief of the slaves as if well satisfied with what she heard.

"White Falcon, the Tatars also brought to me tales of your daring. When we met on the steppe, they pointed you out to me, and I thought that God had sent to me a sword to strike down the outlaw Skal. My thought is not otherwise now—I bid you take command of my men."

"Has Giovanni told you that I will lead them into the forest?"

"A bold stroke. It likes me well."

"Then we mount before dawn, and I ask you to remain at Tor."

Ivga stretched out lithe arms to the fire and threw back her head, her eyes half closed.

"Nay, Sir Warrior—I will ride with you."

"It will not be a falcon hunt, this. When a hundred rush upon four hundred in the deep snow only God knows where the victory will lie, my lady. Abide at Tor and if we are beaten you may still escape alive."

"What is life?" Ivga rose and placed a hand upon his shoulder. "Who knows what lies at the end of the road? I will ride with you, my lord, and if we find death, then surely the tale of it will be on the lips of men and minstrels for the ages of ages."

Looking down into the beautiful eyes, sensing the impetuous spirit of the *divchina*, Kirdy felt the spell that had been laid upon the men of Tor, who loved Ivga.

"Eh, you are brave, my lady." Glancing at the stained glass of the window, he added, "Sleep now, if you can. It is near cock-crow."

Ivga laughed.

"On such a night, who could sleep?" And, when she had searched his face with a swift glance, "Send Ibrahim to me, if you will, with my sword and armor."

In the guest room of Tor, Khlit, the Wolf, had been sleeping soundly in spite of the clatter of cups and the hum of voices from the revelers in the hall, until a song in the high voice of the Frenchman, Jean, awakened him and he noticed Kirdy sitting on a bench by the candle that Ayub had lighted as a protection against further visits of the apparition with the white eyes. The young Cossack was gripping his head with both hands and groaning.

After watching him for a moment Khlit growled—

"Have you been hunting devils?"

"Fire burns me, little grandfather! I have seen treachery and evil! Where now is Cossack honor? It is dark, the road."

Khlit did not go to sleep again. Aware by some sixth sense that the dawn was at hand, he yawned, scratched his head and felt for his boots. "She is a beautiful witch—devil take her," he said to himself. But to Kirdy he said nothing, only watched his grandson with troubled eyes.

IV

In open country, do not try to bar your enemy's way; on dangerous ground, press ahead quickly; on desperate ground—fight.—Maxims of Sun Tsu.

BOTH Khlit and Ayub eyed Kirdy expectantly when he rode out in front of the Tor men, an hour later. Ivga's warriors had spent the night over the wine cup and many of them had heated their brains with *bhang*. They were loud-tongued and quarrelsome—a few singing, others savagely silent. Giovanni, morose at the selection of the young Cossack as leader, was not inclined to give Kirdy any help.

It was a wild and orderless array, each man armed to his own choice; but armed they were, and the veteran Cossacks saw that the horses were good ones.

"These sons of dogs will give a good account of themselves if cornered," Ayub remarked to Khlit, "but it remains to be seen what they will do in the open field!"

They quieted down the moment Ivga appeared on her white horse. Every eye noticed that the supposed *koldun* did not wear the eagle's wings, and this was taken as a portent of something unusual. Ivga had worn the wings the better to disguise her figure and to increase the awe in which the men held the rider of the white horse. Perhaps now she felt they would be in the way, or she discarded them on a whim.

In fact everything that Ivga did sprang from a whim; for two years she had been absolute lord of slaves, captives and men-at-arms, and she had become a little satiated with the taste of power, in ruling Tor. She longed for new fields, for greater homage. In the wilderness of the border, she saw herself a queen riding to conquest—with Kirdy at her side.

Until the White Falcon had come to Tor, the maiden Ivga had not known the meaning of love, and perhaps her heart went out to Kirdy because in no way would he submit to her. Until Skal and his horde moved against her, she had met no worthy rival.

Now, in the bleak hour before dawn, in the glow of spluttering torches, facing lines of armed men, Ivga was thoroughly happy.

Twenty warriors—and Kirdy selected those who carried arquebuses—were told off to garrison Tor under Ibrahim's orders, and then the Cossack rode down the ranks, searching every man for pistols, and giving all that he found to Ibrahim, taking no heed of the barbed oaths of the owners.

Then he kneed his pony up to Ivga without taking off his *kalpak*.

"*Boyarìshna*, there is yet time to gather your treasure on pack horses and escape to the Don country."

"Go, White Falcon mine—go, if you fear! You have my leave to fly!"

And a little laugh fluttered in her throat as she watched his face. He drew the rein against the pony's neck and turned away.

"*Shagom marsh!*" he called out in Muscovite speech. "Forward, slowly."

But when he passed the dark group of Tatar riders at the gate, his lips parted in explosive gutturals:

"*Ahatou ashanga, yarou! Yaubou boumbi!*"

And the men of Tatary, the Tcheremisse and the Kitans drew in their breath sibillantly, and every gnome-like head turned toward Kirdy expectantly. He had addressed them in their own speech, in pure Mongol, that these inveterate wanderers had not heard for many winters. Their homeland was the Gobi and there Kirdy had been born and weaned. He spoke as a Mongol khan, with authority and understanding:

"Brothers of the winged rider, take heed! Show the road without haste."

They closed around him and Ivga, astonished and silent, waiting patiently for daylight so that they could look more closely at Kirdy. Ivga's curiosity took fire at once.

"What did you say to them?"

"They are your best men." He did not answer her question. "It is well that you have thirty such and that you wore the eagle's wings formerly when you took to the saddle."

"And why, my Cossack?"

Among the Mongol tribes a chieftain wore an eagle's feather, white or black, and the term *ashanga*,—winged rider—was expressive of highest praise. The matter-of-fact Tatars held Ivga in awe, the more so as she was quite fearless. Their eyes, keen to see in the darkness, had made out that she was a woman. Believing implicitly in magicians, they assured themselves that she was a *shaytàn eperekè*—a particularly potent forest goblin, appearing sometimes as an old man, sometimes as a young maiden. The *shaytàn eperekè* was known to spring up behind a rider and drive the horse over a precipice. All this Kirdy, whose thoughts were otherwise occupied, did not see fit to confide in Ivga.

In fact he became utterly silent and would not reply to her questions, and the Tatars, who missed nothing of all this, remarked that the White Falcon had no fear of the magician.

Two abreast, the horsemen filed into the trail behind the Tatars, Khlit and Ayub bringing up the rear. They had barely passed the gate when Khlit looked back. A pony was galloping after them, bearing a rider who wore no sword, carried no spear.

"It's the Jew," Khlit muttered and moved on again.

Shmel had no sooner drawn abreast them than he began to wag his tongue, his head and his legs all at once.

"Hi, noble lords, I will tend your horses; I have some fine *goriilka* in my flask, and anything you tell me to do, I will obey faithfully. Only let me stay near your horses' tails and do not drive me away."

The Cossacks, who looked after their own mounts and did not drink on the road, paid no attention to him, until Ayub grunted:

"It is a wonderful thing that you are not lying on your Jew's quilt at Tor, where there is gold and silver and a fire. Why do you take the snow road this night?"

"Because it is safer by the swords of such kingly warriors than in Tor."

"How, safer?"

"Because the *boyarìshna* and her knights are less to be feared than the dwarf and that pagan with the dark face—Abraham, as they call him, blasphemously."

Ayub yawned, drew the collar of his *svitka* tighter, and regarded Shmel without favor.

"You have lapped up too much *gorilka*,

jackal. The lady is sleeping at Tor and Erlik Khan rides at the head of the column."

"If the noble lord will forgive me, it is otherwise."

Bending down from his high saddle, the big Zaporoghian stared into the thin face of the merchant until he could see the flickering and restless eyes.

"Do you desire to feed the kites, that you say a Cossack is drunk on the march?"

"As God lives, worthy colonel, I did not say that. I swear by all that's holy, yesterday morning I tried to warn the young *ataman* that the lady Ivga was the one who took you prisoner—"

"Death to you! We yielded to no one! The lady Ivga is a gentlewoman, though married to a dog-souled magician."

Seeing Ayub reach over his shoulder, toward the projecting hilt of the broadsword, Shmel groaned.

"Harken only one little moment, illustrious lord, and then do as you like with me. That night on the steppe when you dealt such a blow with the sword—I swear never was such a blow seen before—I was so near the winged rider that the horse snuffled on my neck. My soul sat on my shoulders from fear but I looked around and through the bars of the helmet I saw that the eyes of the rider were dark. Close at hand I heard her voice—a woman's voice. The captain Giovanni knows this secret, though he keeps his own counsel—"

"The Jew speaks the truth," growled Khlit suddenly, because Shmel was raising his voice and the nearest men-at-arms were looking around.

Ayub stared at his friend and scratched his ear.

"What do you know of this, old wolf?"

"Last night Kirdy said he was going to speak with Erlik Khan, but at cock-crow his Cossack soul was troubled and he knew not what to do. A woman had talked to him."

Forgetting Shmel, Ayub pondered and presently gathered up his reins.

"Where are you going?" Khlit asked quickly.

"To warn Kirdy."

"Of what?"

"Of the rider on the white horse. If the dwarf is not a *koldun*, then she is a witch or vampire. If Kirdy's spirit is dark, I'll eat grass but she has laid a spell on him. He will not speak to us. At the first cliff she may jump up behind him and drive his horse over to death."

"She may do worse," muttered Khlit, but kept his hand on the Zaporoghian's rein. "Nay, do not go. Are you his friend?"

"In all things."

"Then wait. He has taken the bit in his teeth; he has chosen the path he will follow."

Ayub considered this for a moment.

"*Ay-a tak.* It is in my mind, old wolf, that you are testing Kirdy."

"Nay," said Khlit grimly. "He is making a trial of himself."

"Well, brother, it is true that every warrior finds himself some day in the arms of a beautiful woman who would put a spell on him. And it is also true that we have agreed to help the people of Tor. And yet—"

Tugging at the ends of his long mustache with both fists, he frowned heavily, glancing now and then at the impassive Khlit. Shmel, well satisfied to be ignored, followed out of reach but within earshot, venturing from time to time a remark that if the Cossack colonels took rich spoil from the Volga men they would find no one ready to give them half the value that he would give.

"*Allah!*" said the Zaporoghian at length, half to himself, "the horses are snorting—that means either a vampire is near, or a good omen. The —— only knows which it is. But to send our falcon against Skal and his horde with only a hundred of such tavern sweepings! And with a beautiful witch whispering in his ear. May the dogs bite you, Khlit! It is all very well to make a test of a youngster, but a hare does not jump over a wolf to test its legs."

And he reached up to make certain that his sword was loose in the scabbard.

THROUGHOUT the day Kirdy led them without a halt except to breathe the horses, and the Tatars twisted and turned so often that the men of Tor had no very good idea where they were when they dismounted at sunset in a mass of immense firs. They only knew that they had climbed from the scattered groves around the *ousadba* to a higher region where the forest was unbroken, and the tree trunks rose far above their spear tips before branches began to spread out in to the network that made the forest bed a labyrinth of darkness. Here the snow was only a few inches deep, and they could make

out a multitude of tracks left by men on foot and sleds. And here Kirdy dismounted them, bidding them eat what was in their saddle bags, and sending off the ponies in charge of five Tatars armed with bows. Only Ivga kept her white stallion, and this seemed natural enough to the men of Tor who had never seen Erlik Khan out of the saddle. They were too hungry to wonder much, and when they had finished eating Kirdy had disappeared in the darkness with his guides.

Their bellies filled, they began to gather in groups and speculate in a dozen languages as to what was going to happen. They could light no fire—Kirdy had forbidden that—and they began to be cold and to complain. They had neither brandy nor vodka nor any understanding of what was going on and their mood was like the maw of the forest. Then the moon rose somewhere and its rays filtering through the mesh of firs outlined patches of snow.

By its light Giovanni was able to search out Ayub and to ask a question.

"Where is your White Falcon? Why does he wait for moon-rise?"

"*Ekh*," said the Zaporoghian who was none too pleased at being dismounted, "he waits so your soul will have light to find its way out of the world after your body is cut open." And he added under his breath, "May it roost in purgatory!"

But Kirdy himself came striding through the patches of moonlight, his white *svitka* blending with the snow carpet, giving out orders as a wind-whipped torch looses sparks.

"Are your bowstrings dry in the pouches? The bows oiled? Good. String your bows—ye who have them—shift your quivers and form behind the captain Giovanni. Yonder."

It was no idle question he asked because the very trunks of the trees were damp and a wet bowstring is only a little more useful than wet powder. Surprized, the men who had bows obeyed. And before the others could grumble, Kirdy had them in charge of Jean the Frenchman. The Tatars he left with Khlit, who alone—excepting himself—could hold them in hand.

Standing in the center of the three groups, hand on hip, he was silent for a moment, paying no attention to the white stallion that paced out of the shadows and halted at his shoulder. But the men-at-arms saw and crossed themselves or cursed as the mood struck them.

"O ye men of Tor!" Kirdy's words rang out with the hard echo of striking steel. "Ye are doomed men. Too often have ye raided the trails. Your sword edges are dull from striking down cattle. You have lived like dogs. What honor have ye—what courage?"

Men held their breath, watching to see the rider of the white horse strike down the young Cossack. But something like a laugh came from between the bars of the helmet that hid Ivga's face.

"Hide of ——!" whispered Ayub hoarsely. "The fledgling is mad. They will claw him!"

A growl went up from the assembled warriors. Among them were bold spirits, enthralled by Ivga's beauty, and souls were not lacking that had once held honor dear. Then, too, there was stealthy fumbling for throwing daggers and fitting of arrows to strings. The men of Tor were in no mood to suffer abuse.

"Is there any," pursued Kirdy without moving, "who fears not to draw steel when he is named a dog?"

"I—horns and hoofs of Satan, I—I will."

Three tall men stepped out from the groups, sword in hand. Giovanni, gnawing thin lips, was not among them—he was staring at the rider of the white horse.

Kirdy's laugh was short and savage. "Good! Ye are the three I will take. Ayub, you too, stand with these."

Surprized at being singled out in this fashion, the three warriors waited to hear what more the Cossack would say, and the giant Zaporoghian joined them.

"We five," said Kirdy, smiling, "will strike for the tent of Skal. We will bring him to earth early in the fight. For an hour I watched his camp, and his tent is in the center of the fires. He is as tall as Ayub, here, with yellow boots—a bearskin on his shoulders."

They listened now attentively, and he laughed at the two groups behind the captains. Jean the Frenchman had stepped forward with the three boldest spirits, but Kirdy had waved him back saying that his work was elsewhere.

"Ye are doomed," he cried, "and lost indeed if you do not overthrow the Volga men. Their camp is between you and Tor. In the day we circled it, and now you must

flight your way back or wander without food in the forest. The horses have been driven back along our trail and the horse-herders have orders to greet with arrows any who run after them."

A hoarse roar of anger went up at this—even Ayub grumbling aloud that his horse should have been taken from him without his knowledge. Only the three that had been chosen out of the ninety-five kept silence, knowing from their own experience that Kirdy had more to say.

"Skal's *kibitka* lies half a league from here," went on the White Falcon calmly, "and many of his horde are awake around the fires. He has stationed sentries in pairs in eight spots a bow shot from the fires. Our Tatars can deal with them, with the lassoos. Giovanni's detachment will go to the right, to a knoll where the underbrush is thick, and will shoot from their bows when the first blow is struck."

He glanced at the Genoese, who nodded understanding. Greatly as Giovanni disliked Kirdy, the hazard was too instant to think of his own quarrel.

"The captain Jean will work toward the left, and rush in on that side when the first arrows fly."

"And you, Cossack?" The rider of the white horse spoke, low-voiced.

"Skal sleeps. His men obey him like slaves; without him, half their strength is lost. With these four, I will be the first to enter his camp lines, and one of us must bring him down. Then, not knowing our numbers, the Volga men will yield. But as long as Skal remains on his feet it will go hard with us."

He turned impatiently to the listening throng:

"The moon will set in three hours. Will ye go forward to fight or run off to die like jackals?"

"Monsieur," observed the captain Jean, "such words are not to be endured. If both of us come out of this, it must be that we measure swords."

"Well said," laughed the White Falcon.

The men-at-arms growled assent, and Ivga answered for them—

"Lead on, my Cossack, to Skal or the——."

Hidden in the shadows with his Tatars Khlit looked around for Shmel, chuckling. He was beholding the fruit of the years when he had fostered Kirdy. He alone had read what was in the young warrior's mind. The firearms had been left behind so that no premature alarm should be given. The men of Tor had been led around behind the Volga band so that they must fight if they hoped to behold Tor again. The horses had been sent away to prevent any from attempting to flee if the fight went against them at first. Without their being aware of his plan Kirdy had deliberately cornered his followers, and such men fought best if they were desperate.

Only—Khlit knew that Kirdy should have kept five horses for himself and those who were to try to pick the Volga chieftain from the midst of the pirates. Kirdy had not done so because it must inevitably have aroused suspicion among the men left on foot.

"Shmel," he growled when he had found the Jew. "Once you cackled when the Tor riders were seeking us out in the steppe, and gave us away. This time you will not be with us. Go—nay, back along the trail. So!"

He caught the trader as if to thrust him in the right direction, and whispered swiftly in his ear. Shmel departed, his thin legs and his cap flying as if, Ayub observed, his soul had come out of his wallet and sat on his shoulders again.

V

If they are desperate, men will fight to win or die; at such a time they will not draw back or flee—officers and warriors will be in accord and all orders will be obeyed.—Maxims of Sun Tsu.

SKAL did not sleep for long. He crawled out of his felt tent and came to squat by the largest of the fires—his heavy shoulders drooping, his long arms crossed on his bare knees.

He had the broad, stooped head of a Kalmuk, and black eyes that shifted constantly, from the embers at his toes, to one of his lieutenants who was cleaning a pistol in the clear moonlight, to a dark body that lay stretched out in the form of a cross in the snow. This was a woodsman, one of the serfs of Tor, whom Skal had captured that day and had staked out on the ground, to torture until he wrung from the serf's lips certain things he desired to know about Tor.

His long, greasy hair lay heavy on the bear's hide that covered gigantic shoulders.

He listened idly to the rattle of dice on a wagon board, to an angry mutter of quarreling men, and the movements of the oxen penned behind the sledges.

Skal had chosen his camp shrewdly, in a clearing hidden from sight by surrounding ridges, where fuel could be gathered without felling any of the tall firs that screened him. The sledges—the largest of them bearing two brass ship's cannon—and the oxen protected the two sides of the camp toward Tor, and he knew that his outposts were alert. Skal had a way of enforcing obedience among the escaped serfs, the deserters and the gallows-birds that had rallied to him on the Volga.

From the dead woodsman he had learned how few were the men-at-arms of Erlik Khan, and he did not look to be attacked. Although his keen senses sampled the sounds and smells of the night he was thinking of the face and slender body of Ivga, and of his purpose to take her for himself.

"*Ekh-ma-a*, father," grunted the man who was charging a pistol. "Such a moon—like a sun, it is."

Skal lifted his dark face toward the sky, and his lip twisted away from his teeth.

"Yonder the kites rise up. They have sighted this." And he spat on the body beside him, but his restless eyes took account of the crows circling over the pines.

The lieutenant—he had a thin red beard and a skin so pitted with small-pox it resembled carved wood—glanced sidewise at his leader without raising his eyes. It was not good, to his thinking, to look upon the full moon.

"Aye, Skal, there will be vultures and wolves aplenty at Tor, come another night."

The shaggy giant was wholly intent on the forest wall beneath the wheeling crows.

"*Sloo-ou—chay-y!*"

Beyond the wagons the sentinels raised their routine cry, but their mates on the other side did not echo it. Skal gripped hard upon the *kisten* in his fists—the long iron mace ending in a knobbed boss, that was heavier than a broadsword. A clumsy weapon in ordinary hands, but in Skal's grasp a thing more dangerous than any sword because he could wield it as lightly as a wooden cudgel.

"*Màtka Bozka schotzè driasnùlo!* Mother of —— what was that noise?"

The man with the red beard raised his head but heard nothing except the rattling of the oxen's chains and the soughing wind above him.

Without a sound Skal sprang to his feet, as a wolf stirs up, alert, with blazing eyes. He strode from the fire, away from the wagons and stopped as suddenly as if he had scented danger under his nose. Throwing back his great head he laughed deep in his throat and roared—

"Up lads—weapons in hand!"

From the near-by edge of shadow he had seen five men walking toward the camp, and still no cry from his sentinels. He saw in a glance that the foremost wore a pure white *svitka* and Cossack *kalpak*, and the second was as large in stature as Skal himself.

Kicking at the nearest of the sleepers, Skal started toward the intruders; the dicers left their board, drawing their short, straight swords, and everywhere the Volga men began to roll out of their sheepskins.

The Cossack leader whipped out his saber and howled like a wolf. Instantly arrows flicked from the overhanging ridge and several of the pirates stumbled to their knees. The red lieutenant levelled his freshly charged pistol, and shot down one of the five who were now running within spear cast of the Volga chief.

"Up!" roared Skal. "Close up, dogs! Steel to them."

His left hand jerked a small ax from his belt—a weapon that he could throw, splitting open the head of a foeman at ten paces. But a knot of his men gathered in front of him, and others, running up, formed a thin line on either hand. Of these the speeding arrows of the hidden bowmen took heavy toll.

The man nearest Skal groaned and stepped back, a shaft embedded under his heart. The Volga chieftain dropped his ax long enough to rip the arrow from the dying pirate and stare at its smoking point.

"Tatars and Cossack thieves!" he roared. "Drive them back to their holes."

This loosed Ayub's tongue.

"You lie, dog-face!" he cried. "Here are Zaporoghian swords, that have made Satan glad before now."

At his cry the Volga men hung back, but, urged by Skal and seeing no more than the four in front of them, five warriors ran at Kirdy. He sprang forward to meet them, caught one blade under the edge of his saber and passed the point through the man's throat. Stepping quickly to one side,

he parried another's slash and, laughing, smote the pirate in the forehead with his hilt. Stunned, the man was cut down by one of Ivga's champions.

Meanwhile Ayub had run forward, cutting savagely to left and right with his two-handed sword, so that only one of the five *burlaki* remained afoot. He was engaged by the other swordsman, while Ayub and Kirdy pressed forward, their shoulders touching, to reach Skal.

They had failed in the attempt to surprize the shrewd chieftain and both of them knew that if they could not slay Skal quickly they would be surrounded and borne down by numbers. Giovanni was slow in advancing to aid them.

But on their left Jean the Frenchman was running into the camp followed by his three dozen, and the Volga men on this side were facing about to form against the newcomers whose number in that uncertain light was unknowable. So that, for a moment, only a few men stood around Skal.

THE Cossacks drove in. Kirdy found himself opposed by the lieutenant who hurled his empty pistol and crouched as Kirdy cut at his head. The heavy saber of the Volga man parried the first cut, and, stepping forward, he locked blades. Instantly his left arm flung out and he gripped Kirdy's weapon in his hand, drawing his own blade free with a shout of triumph.

Before he could bring down his saber the Cossack had caught and held his right wrist. At the same time Kirdy twisted his blade, pulling it back sharply, and the red-beard screamed when his fingers came off under the razor edge of the curved sword. Kirdy thrust him through, pushed him aside, and ran on.

Skal had gone back into the center of his camp to rally his followers. On either side men were fighting in groups or singly. The clatter of steel grew louder, the mutter of voices swelled to a roar.

"Ou-ha-al"

Kirdy heard Ayub's shout and saw the big Zaporoghian running after Skal, accompanied only by one of the Tor men. Behind him Khlit's Tatars were coming forward, plying their bows.

But the young Cossack saw that on all sides the attack had been checked. Men were falling to the blood-stained snow. The armored knights of Tor were pressing in savagely, but the greater number of the wild *burlaki* was beginning to tell. All this he noticed as he sped after Ayub.

Skal turned, at the glowing embers of the large fire, and, while his men ran toward him, hurled his ax. It struck fair the forehead of the remaining warrior beside Ayub and split his skull, so that he dropped where he was hit and lay motionless.

"Satan looks after his own!" laughed Ayub. "Greet him well, ye!"

Before Kirdy could reach him, the broadsword and *kisten* had clashed, bright sparks shooting forth into the haze of moonlight.

"Death to you!" howled Skal.

For a moment it seemed as if the long iron *kisten* would shiver the broad blade of the Cossack. Once the knobbed end of the mace swept off his *kalpak*, drawing blood from his shaven brow.

"Back, brother," Kirdy pleaded, "or he will beat you down."

The heavy *kisten*, swung with all the strength of the Volga chieftain, seemed on the point of smashing in Ayub's skull like a melon. At such close quarters, the big Zaporoghian had neither time nor room to swing his broadsword; all he could do was to parry the stunning blows of the mace.

"I'll give ground to no man," he panted, and suddenly dropped his sword. The Volga men, seeing this combat of the two giants, hung back expectantly, and Skal, beholding Ayub defenseless before him, shouted aloud and swung the *kisten* high.

As he did so Ayub hit out unexpectedly with his right fist and toppled the chieftain back. Before Skal could regain his footing and strike, Ayub had seized him around the ribs.

Skal beat at the Cossack's head, then gripped Ayub's throat in both hands, letting fall the *kisten*. They swayed and trampled back and forth, their heads growing darker with congested blood. Ayub had locked his chin on his foeman's shoulder, and for a space the chieftain could not crush in his neck muscles.

Both men were gasping, their sinews cracking. They swerved into the fire and out again, their blackened boots smoking in the snow. Then Skal grunted. One of his ribs had broken. Ayub, grimly

silent, tightened the grip of his steel-like arms.

Skal's twisted face grew black and he screamed suddenly, choking as the breath was driven from his lungs. His arms went limp and he lay in Ayub's grasp, his ribs cracked, his back broken.

The *burlaki* stared, not believing that Skal could be dead. But Tatar arrows smote them and those who had watched the fight turned to flee, crying that they were dealing not with men but with demons. Others joined them in seeking the safety of the forest. Kirdy, standing vigilant beside the wearied Ayub, saw that half the Volga men had abandoned the camp.

"*Umpf*" the Zaporoghian grunted, picking up his sword and leaning on it while he got his breath back. "It was said he held mass for Satan. That did him little good."

"Come," said Kirdy impatiently, and they plunged into the thick of the fighting, leaving, as they pressed on, a trail of the dead behind them. As flames soar up when fresh wood is cast on a fire, the struggle about the Cossacks grew more intense—no longer were the voices of men to be heard, only the clang of weapons, the splintering of wood and the bellowing of the frightened oxen.

On the outskirts of the camp some one shouted; a horse neighed and presently men began to call out everywhere:

"Quarter—throw down your blades!—Make an end—Erlik Khan gives quarter!"

First one, then a dozen of the Volga *burlaki*, seeing that the warriors of Tor grounded the points of their sabers, threw down their weapons. Then all stood disarmed, looking in stunned silence at the apparition that paced out of the forest wall into the moonlight.

Upon the white horse sat Ivga without her helmet. Her cape was thrown back and her shining black hair flooded her slender shoulders; her eyes sparkled with delight. The very poise of her head showed the pride she felt in Kirdy when she reined toward him, and placed her hand on his shoulder. So tall was the young Cossack that she needed not to lean down to do this.

"My falcon, even in former ages there were no greater heroes! *Ai*—my enemies lie scattered under your sword. Now it remains for Ivga of Tor to pay her debt."

VI

"What is homage without loyalty, or profit without honor? No more than the husk without the seed!" —KASHMIRI PROVERB.

THE fear that shone from the stained faces of Ivga's men was no greater than the bewilderment of the Volga men when they beheld a young woman in command. They thought that the wizard, Erlik Khan, had chosen to appear in this semblance. All this amused Ivga who issued orders to fetch in the pirates who had sought shelter in the forest, and to build up the fires.

"I will no longer wear the mask, Messer Giovanni," she assured the Genoese who looked more sallow than ever when he saw her admiration for the Cossack. "Do you make known to these animals of mine why I hid behind the helmet of Erlik Khan."

"Men of Tor," responded the ready-witted captain, "the mistress is no magician. Erlik Khan is no more than a name, to put fear into our enemies. Those who first came to the *ousadba* beheld the dwarf, Erlik and made up a tale that he was a *koldun*. The *boyarìshna* could not lead you, in the raids, if you thought she was no more than a maiden, unskilled in war. So she clad herself as you see, and took the name of Erlik Khan—and you have seen that no foeman could stand against her. Even," he added with a faint sneer, "these lordly and renowned Cossacks were taken—"

Ayub lifted his head angrily, but Ivga smiled at him, and flicked Giovanni with her whip.

"Enough, sir captain! And now harken, O ye rivermen. Your lives are spared—if ye serve me faithfully in all things, giving up the ships hidden in the reeds of the river."

The captives answered with an instant shout—

"We will serve you, gracious lady!"

Without leaders of their own, awed by her beauty, those nearest Ivga fell on their knees and beat their foreheads against the snow.

"*Ohai*, my dogs!" she laughed. "The portage is ours; now we will frolic on the Volga. We will make the red cock crow in the walled villages, and drink the wines of Astrakhan. Did Skal show you good hunting? Now the frontier is yours and you will take what you will—red gold and fair women, and the altar pieces of the monks!"

She knew how to stir their blood. They

flung up their hands and roared approval, and the men of Tor listened eagerly, understanding now why the lives of the *burlaki* had been spared. With Skal's men, the power of Tor was doubled. With cannon and ships they could levy tribute on the river. Outlaws all, they grinned and nudged one another, elated—not quite certain yet whether she were witch or human, but assured of the good fortune that followed her.

"We will kindle things up, Lady-Miss!" they proclaimed.

Again Ivga laughed, her hand on Kirdy's shoulder.

"We shall kindle a flame that will light the border. The Tatars of the far steppe will obey the White Falcon; their hordes will cross the river, to our aid. We shall sow terror.' And why, men of Tor?"

They held their breath and crowded closer to hear the better, forgetful of wounds.

"Why?" echoed Jean, the Frenchman, his eyes on her face.

"*Boris Gudunov is dead!*"

Giovanni, his thin features sharp in the firelight, cried up at her.

"The Czar is dead?"

"Aye so—he who ruled Muscovy and the steppe with a hand of iron and bound you—and you—serfs to the soil." She pointed her whip at the outlaws. "Now the power of the Czar is no more than a shadow. Already his empire breaks up—the Kalmuk across the river rides against the Muscovites; the Poles are on the march. One town arms against another. The plundering has begun and we will take our share."

Only half understanding, the outlaws bellowed their glee. Plunder—they lived for nothing more than that.

But Ivga, utterly heedless of them, had bent her dark head to the silent Kirdy.

"My lord," she whispered exultantly, "such words serve to feed the rabble. Yet it is true, my falcon—all true. Once I lied to you, but now—"

The color deepened in her cheeks and she brushed back the tangle of her hair.

"Now I yield Tor to you."

When he did not answer at once, she went on swiftly:

"Out of the fragments of the border an empire can be built up. At such times of stress the masterless men flock to leaders. The Cossack Irmak made an empire out of Sibir with fewer men than these."

"Fewer, but they were Don Cossacks," said Kirdy reflectively.

"And can not you lead Don Cossacks to Tor? It has been told me that Boris Gudunov sent five hundred of your comrades, you among them, to suffer in the deserts of Asia. Do you not live by the sword? Be master of Tor and the Khan of all the hordes will send envoys to you."

The pressure of her hand, the insistence of her splendid eyes stirred the blood of the warrior. The hint of coming war aroused him instantly.

"And I, Ivga—" the words barely reached his ear—"will serve you, my falcon, body and soul. Of all men, I love only you."

"You!" he cried, trying to understand. "You love—"

"The White Falcon." She bent still lower in the saddle and raised his hand, pressing it with sudden strength to her forehead. Of all those who stood around them, only Giovanni saw the act, and frowned.

"Nay, my falcon," she added merrily, "do not the very gods serve you? Your sword will never be drawn against your brother Cossacks, because the Zaporoghians have lifted the standard of war. Their Siech, their mother, has declared itself free."

The beauty of the woman that had aroused his admiration, the savage appeal of her ambition, her very pride in him—all these faded from his thoughts. With an effort he drew his eyes from hers, and felt as if invisible chains had fallen away from him.

"The Siech's at war! A voice within cried it out, and the words rose to his lips as he looked around eagerly for Khlit. "Little grandfather" he shouted, "there is war in the Cossack land. We must hasten to the Siech."

No longer was his spirit troubled; the path he meant to take was clear to his eyes; an eagerness to be in the saddle seized upon him.

"You would leave me?" Ivga's lips were still smiling, but her cheeks had turned colorless.

"The road awaits us."

"But—you would not leave me. Why? Among the Cossacks of the Siech who would know the White Falcon? Here you are master. Yonder you would curry your horse and ride guard at night, in the snow. Your captain would shout at you, and if there is a battle, you would charge like

cattle, pressed in among a thousand of your kind. Why do you think of that?"

Kirdy smiled. Ivga had painted for him the very longing that was in his heart. To take his place among the Cossacks, and hear a *sotnik* swear at him in his own language; to be in the saddle, on the night round of the picket lines, singing to the restless horses—to charge with the thunder of a thousand hoofs in his ear!

"*Ekh*, I thank you for the word. You are brave, *boyarishna*, and beautiful as the dawn on the southern steppe. Now Skal is dead and you have many swords to serve you. Nay—we must seek the horses, because the road is long to the Siech."

The bewilderment and dismay had left her eyes and they had grown bleak. Ivga had smiled at men before now, and they had given their lives to her.

"I would have—slain Erlik, for your sake," she whispered.

Kirdy's lips tightened. Because Ivga had almost tricked him into dishonoring his sword by cutting down the dwarf, who was no longer useful to her, he had distrusted her after that hour. But he found no words to make this clear to her.

Nor could he make clear to her that he had no love for Tor and its brigands—a woman's kingdom, luxurious as a court of Ind, but impalpable and brief as the morning mist. Khlit had said truly that the soul might be loosed from the body but a Cossack's pride could not be driven from his soul.

He did not see the flush that darkened even her eyes, or hear the swift pounding of her heart. Ivga's pride, in its own way, was no less than his.

"Choose!" she cried, struggling to breathe evenly. "The road, or my—service!"

Kirdy looked out beyond the fires. Over the serried line of the forest, the first dull streaks of the sun's rising were showing in the sky. The moon had grown smaller, it seemed, and was like a round orange lantern hung near the horizon.

"Farewell, *boyarishna*—may God keep you."

And in that moment Ivga had a feeling that it would be better to permit the three Cossacks to go, as she had pledged, unharmed from Tor. But anger, like a hot flash, leaped from her heart to her brain. She smiled strangely.

"I jested, my falcon. I see it is true that Cossacks are clowns without spirit who groom horses well. Giovanni!"

A GLANCE at the thin, sardonic face of the Genoese captain decided her, and she spoke to him under her breath, turning her back on Kirdy.

With a half nod Giovanni passed around her horse, drawing off one of his gauntlets as he did so. Ignoring Khlit and Ayub he bowed before Kirdy, the hand with the glove sweeping low.

"Ha, you are in haste, Messer Cossack. You would be off before I could remind you of your promise—a little matter of satisfaction that is due me."

Without giving Kirdy a chance to answer he stepped forward and made as if to flick the glove in his face. Kirdy's hand went to his sword hilt instantly and Giovanni appeared to ponder.

"Perhaps if I stir you up with the flat of the blade, you will stay to cross swords with me. Ah, so!"

Kirdy had started forward, his eyes blazing, until he was checked by Ayub's great arms.

"Will you fight with your own weapon?" Messer Giovanni asked with some curiosity. "Then choose the ground. As for seconds—"

"Enough!" cried Kirdy. "Begin!"

But the Genoese, who was no stranger to the dueling ground, wished to make the most of the Cossack's impatience. He would have challenged Kirdy on his own account; now, at the unexpected suggestion from Ivga that he do so, he experienced a keen satisfaction, knowing that the young warrior had aroused such anger in the mistress of Tor that his blood would certainly be shed.

Giovanni knew much of women. In Ivga's passion he foresaw favor for himself, and a step toward that for which he had planned patiently ever since, coming to Tor, he had been aware that Ivga was the winged rider. Leisurely, he removed his coat, and warmed his fingers at the fire, bidding the outlaws throw on more wood so that the light would be better.

Then he stamped on the surface of hard, trodden snow, to make certain of the footing and took off his coat.

Jean the Frenchman approached Kirdy, who, his *svitka* flung aside carelessly, stood

with his eyes fixed on the black form of Giovanni.

"*Par dex,*" exclaimed the captain, "you will not fight with that light saber?"

Impatiently, Kirdy nodded.

"But you can not do that!" The Frenchman flung out his hands and his eyes widened. "Look! Giovanni uses the heavy campaign rapier—a straight blade. With the curved blade you can not parry his thrust—for long. Perhaps you have never dealt with an Italian rapier before?"

"He has not," Ayub put in, and added anxiously to Kirdy, "Eh, brother, that black dog will out-reach you—his blade will glide around your *sablianka.*"

The French captain put his hand on his hip and bowed.

"Young sir, you are brave. I—Jean Etienne de Montleherey—was once accounted a *maitre de l'escrime.* I have had bouts with Giovanni. Consider, he is fresh, you are wearied. Take then my blade, if you will. In its day, it served well a Christian king."

His blurred eyes gleamed and he straightened his shoulders with something of a swagger. Kirdy glanced at the plain rapier of the Frankish captain.

"Nay, *sotnik,* the curved blade fits a Cossack hand."

"As you will." Jean de Montleherey hesitated, and added under his breath, "Sir Cossack, in our duels the dagger may be used in the left hand. Giovanni wears a knife at his hip. Watch, then, his left hand."

He glanced at Giovanni, who had chosen his ground with his back to one of the fires and was bending the supple blade of the rapier in both hands. Kirdy, arms and throat bare, quivered with eagerness, the curved blade moving restlessly in his grasp.

"To one death, to the other life!" he cried.

The Frenchman glanced again at Giovanni, who nodded gravely.

"Begin, *messieurs,*" he said, and turned to Ayub. "A pity, is it not? A splendid youth. Name of a name!"

Kirdy had sprung forward, slashing thrice at his foe's heart, so swiftly that the watchers stared. And, quietly, Giovanni parried the cuts. His right foot slid forward, his arm shot out and up, and when Ayub could see Kirdy again, blood was dripping from the base of the young warrior's throat. The point of the long rapier had pierced beneath the skin.

Kirdy gave ground. Here was no sweeping onset, no crashing strokes of the saber. He could not leap in and out, as a Cossack fights. The gliding thrust of the rapier could not be foreseen.

Confident now that he had checked the first rush of the Cossack, the Genoese began to attack at once. He was utterly cool as he took matters into his own hands. A master of the sword, driven to flee as an outlaw by an unfortunate duel, he had no doubt of his ability to slay the young Cossack.

"May God and His holy angels watch over Kirdy-aga," groaned Ayub. "*Ekh,* he draws back again. The —— in armor could not stand before him with a saber, but that long spit is always at his throttle."

Giovanni was feinting and thrusting without an instant's respite, the corded muscles standing out on his forearm. The two blades were ripples of flame as the firelight gleamed on the bright steel. And still Kirdy gave ground, perforce, before the menace of that dancing point.

Breathing heavily, the Volga men pressed against the shoulders of their captors, forgetting everything in their delight at the savage play of the swords. Ivga never took her eyes from Kirdy, except when she glanced once fleetingly at Khlit. The old *ataman,* quite undisturbed and feeling the bite of hunger, had drawn a barley cake from his wallet and was munching it steadily, his eyes hidden by shaggy brows watching the flashing weapons.

Kirdy had retreated until he felt one of the wagons behind him. Here he held his ground, crouching, his right arm shortened, only the wrist and elbow moving.

The grating of the blades never ceased, not were they for an instant disengaged. Giovanni was feeling the saber, his rapier whirling in and out. Both men were breathing fast, and sweat ran from their heads. Steam rose around them, in the bitter air.

Giovanni's knees were bent, his body swaying back and forward. Now he smiled. He was growing tired, but Kirdy, weary when the fight began, was panting. Thrust followed thrust, always to be parried by the instinctive skill and the iron wrist of the Cossack. Once the rapier point passed through a fold of Kirdy's shirt at the side, and he cut at Giovanni's head.

But the Genoese slipped back a pace—

and the blades had engaged again before the watchers were aware that the saber had struck, fruitlessly.

"Not then," gasped Giovanni, his smile fixed as if painted on a mask, "but presently —you will die."

He was growing flushed under the eyes, and anger surged through his veins. He had been confident of tiring the Cossack, and it was inconceivable to him that a saber could parry a rapier point for so long. The two men, nearly at the end of their strength, were gathering themselves together for the end.

And still the blades twisted and flashed without respite.

"He lives yet!" whispered Ayub hoarsely. "A golden candle to Saint Nicholas, and a new robe to the good Saint Andrew. May they—"

Suddenly he clutched his head, and Khlit drew in his breath sharply. For the last moment Giovanni had repeated the same glissading thrust—a light feint, a thrust to the other side, against the heart. Three times Kirdy had knocked the rapier point aside. Again Giovanni had feinted. But this time the rapier flashed up before Kirdy's eyes, and a knife gleamed in Giovanni's left hand as it drove for the Cossack's heart.

Kirdy's eyes, fastened on the livid face of the Genoese, had caught the sudden purpose, and the flicker of the knife. His saber swept out and then up. The blade whistled as it cut down twice.

"Name of a name!" whispered the French captain.

Giovanni, slashed through the temples on each side, lay motionless in the snow. But his left hand, severed from the wrist by the first snap of the keen-edged blade, had fallen a dozen feet away, the dagger still gripped in its fingers.

FOR a moment no one moved and then Jean de Montleherey went to the Genoese and turned him over. He was dead—had died in all likelihood before he touched the earth.

Ivga, her lips bloodless, spurred her horse up to the two men and smiled at the French captain.

"Monsieur, you, too, have a word to say to this Cossack. Slay him!"

"I? It is true that I challenged him, and another day I will await him where he pleases." He shrugged plump shoulders, as if explaining a simple matter to a child. "Name of a name, he has fought ten men this night and is cut up. I—Jean de Montleherey could not cross swords with him."

Ivga's hand, that had been pressed against her throat, sought her side. Kirdy, leaning against the wagon, his eyes closed, did not see that she had drawn a dagger from her girdle.

"No!" The Frenchman caught her arm impulsively, and she screamed suddenly.

Wrenching free, she leaned down, and before the man could defend himself, drove the knife blade into his throat.

"A hundred gold pieces to the man who strikes down the Cossack!" she cried at her startled men-at-arms. "Bows—take bows!"

Some of the archers began to string their bows; others, lifting pike and sword, ran forward. They were checked in their onset by a loud whistle from Khlit. The old Cossack had leaped to the top of the line of wagons, and now he whistled again. The men of Tor heard the soft impact of hoofs on the beaten snow and turned to see what riders were approaching.

They beheld instead of riders, a gray pony with an empty saddle, followed by two others. The horses shied at the fires but made toward Khlit, who leaped into the saddle of the gray. He wheeled away, leaning to the neck of the pony so that all the archers saw was a gaunt leg, the tail of a flapping *svitka* and a polished boot hanging over the saddle.

Kirdy and Ayub had jumped for their mounts before any man thought to prevent them. Running beside the ponies, they gained the saddle and raced beyond the firelight. A few arrows whistled over them without doing any harm.

At the edge of the forest Khlit had reined in, and they paused to look back at Ivga.

Motionless in the saddle, the *boyarishna* pressed her hands against her face. On the snow by the white horse lay the bodies of Skal and the two men who had sought her love. In the illusive glow of the firelight it seemed as if they were still trying to look upon her face with their sightless eyes.

Ayub crossed himself and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Eh, tell me brothers—she is beautiful, that's the truth. Is she a witch, or—" he pondered a moment— "a woman who wished to reign like a king?"

But Khlit and Kirdy heeded him not.

They were looking intently at a figure moving toward them in the murk of the forest. It proved to be a mounted man, Shmel on his nag, shambling forward uneasily and yet hopefully.

"Noble colonels—and I swear you will be generals now that the illustrious Cossacks are at war—I obeyed in everything your order. I rode to the Tatar horse-herds, and as God lives, they came near ending my life with their arrows. When they heard the name of the *ataman* Khlit they bowed to the girdle and gave up the horses, pointing out the right ones to me. Then, believe me, I rode like mad to your nobility—"

"Give him gold," Khlit said to his companions.

The three Cossacks untied their wallets and tossed them to Shmel, who was struck dumb by this evidence of madness, and by the circumstance that the warriors had not even counted the gold and silver pieces in the heavy wallets.

"*The Siech's at war, Jew!*" Khlit's beard bristled in a grin, as he tightened his reins and made off.

He was unusually happy. Not four days ago he had said to Ayub that Kirdy's eyes were not yet open. Until now the young warrior had not met with treachery; but at Tor he had dealt with enemies who were hidden, and with the hatred of a proud and ambitious woman. Kirdy was unharmed—a stab in the throat, but unharmed in his spirit and much the wiser.

So great was Khlit's satisfaction, he actually praised Kirdy.

"You did well enough, for a mewling cub. Only don't give up the horses again, you little dog's brother!"

LIME-JUICE MURPHY

by H. C. G. Buckley

OLD "LIME-JUICE MURPHY was a noted character around the Liverpool waterfront, thirty-odd years ago. He had sailed the Seven Seas in half the hard-case packets out of the Mersey before he decided to "swallow the anchor" and gain a living by jumping aboard newly arrived ships to put a "harbor stow" on sails and send down running tackle.

Those were the days before steam had crowded out the windjammers and square-riggers arrived daily at the docks. It was the usual thing for sailors, after a long voyage, to want to clear off ashore without any delay, and Lime-Juice and his kind would be waiting to relieve them. Afterward, when the ship's crew paid off, the substitutes would meet them, either at the shipping office or in some handy pub, and receive their fee, which was ten shillings or more, according to the generosity and inebriation of the individual sailor.

Murphy was a good-natured fellow; but quick-tempered, and famous for his rough-house methods if any one tried to get the better of him.

On one occasion, a bark arrived, the crew of which was composed of West Indians. Lime-Juice relieved one of the men, agreeing to meet him in the Homeward Bound Bar, an hour after pay-off. Sure enough the man, presumably, showed up and asked Lime-Juice what he would drink. After this, he handed Murphy half-a-crown, saying—

"Well, I'm off. Get yourself another drink, mate."

"What's this, you —— son of a sea-cook!" yelled Murphy.

Before any one could interfere, he caught the sailor a hard left and right hook, sending him heavily to the floor.

The colored fellow picked himself up, and for half an hour a battle raged which is still the talk of the docks. But Lime-Juice was a practised fighter, scaled over two hundred pounds, and had not been living on salt-horse—or lime-juice either, despite his name. After wrecking the Homeward Bound Bar pretty thoroughly, he wrecked his opponent in the most complete manner. An ambulance was summoned and, in the tail of the crowd following it, appeared a colored man who, with a look of awe, immediately handed Murphy fifteen shillings.

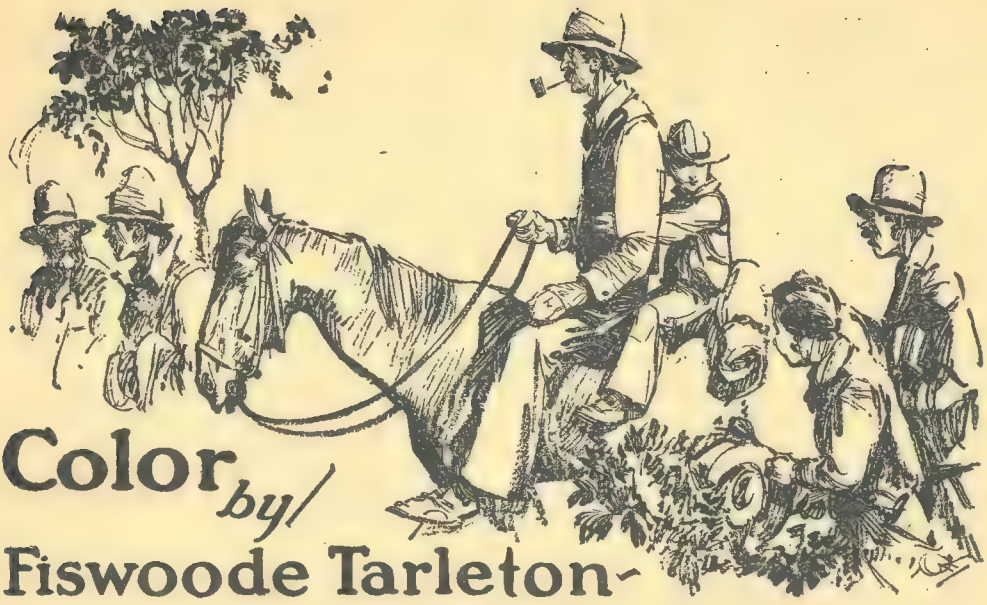
Lime-Juice stared very hard at him.

"—— it!" he said, "that's right! You're the man I relieved. I recognize you now."

He had beaten up the wrong sailor!

He didn't wait.

Apologies weren't in his line.



Color by Fiswoode Tarleton

Aulhor of "Corn."

FIVE CORNERS in Leeston is all lighted up by the gasoline torches of the one-ring circus over in the lot across from the general store. The torches in front of the main entrance throw their lights into the windows of the general store, the harness shop and the creamery. The buildings look as if they were burning on the inside.

People from Leeston and the hills begin filling the circus grounds. There is a forward movement of those who have been hanging back. Mountain folks are tying their horses and mules to hitching posts and advancing slowly in tight groups.

The five roads entering Leeston are dotted with hill folks—hill folks afoot, squatting in springless wagons, riding mules. Gaunt men and women, pouring into Leeston with their young, hesitate on the outskirts and wait for others to draw up, wait until a group is formed before they advance into the light-splashed center of the town. Mountain men who come alone on foot pause by the roadsides and form groups, they fall into clusters, clusters of men who don't know each other but walk along together into the glare.

Black people herd together over by the circus wagons at the back of the lot. The whites of their eyes and bared teeth reflect the light from the gasoline torches. Black children peep from behind wide bodies.

A six-piece band takes its place on the platform to the right of the main entrance of the circus. A trumpet blast and a sleek young man steps up on the platform. He looks around at the white folks and smiles as if he knew them and he motions for them to step up nearer. The crowd doesn't move though, and the young man says something through the corner of his mouth to one of the band men. Another blast of the trumpet. Horses along the street jerk at their hitching straps, mules turn their heads slowly and look around.

The band begins to play. The brasses drop out and the oboe and drum play alone. The crowd of black folks begins swaying in rhythm with the oboe and drum. Some move their lips, some roll their eyes upward. The white folks stir, too, but they are not in rhythm; they shift their feet and bend their bodies different ways. Some of the whites look at each other and smile. A mountain man puts an arm around a girl's waist; another holds his young one high in the air. Some of the white men begin pushing each other in fun. Over on the board walk near a buckboard buggy two tall men wrestle. They roll over on the show lot and laugh.

Holding a big maul in his hand, a spieler stands by a red shaft that mounts high in

the air near the edge of the circus lot. The shaft has numbers on it in hundreds up to one thousand. The spieler swings the maul and strikes a pad at the bottom of the shaft and a pointer flies up a slot in the center of the shaft. The pointer reaches the six-hundred mark and drops.

"Hit 'em! Swat the high-striker! Ring the bell and it's free! See how strong you are for a nickel! Who'll send her to the top?"

The spieler offers the maul to a mountain man who stands near.

"Show me up, you!"

The mountain man hesitates; then takes the maul and hands the spieler a nickel. The mountain man swings the maul over his head and hits the pad, sends the pointer up to seven hundred.

"Showed me up," the spieler shouts. "Well, well! Who'll show up this gent now?"

Other men try. One of them hits seven hundred and fifty.

Over on the platform the other spieler is announcing something and the music stops. The spieler's nasal voice is saying that the man in white tights who is stepping up on the platform will hang by his teeth in mid air, will do a hundred whirls hanging by his teeth under the top.

The white folks move up closer now. The men who have been standing around the high-striker leave it and join the crowd.

Another blast from the trumpet sends the man of a hundred whirls into the tent and brings out another one, a man wearing patent leather boots and holding a whip. A patent leather holster is fixed to his belt and the butt of a small revolver sticks out from the holster.

Through the corner of his mouth the spieler tells the people that the man now on the platform is Captain Nicardo, trapper and tamer of forest-bred lions. Lions will wrestle with the captain inside the tent, one of them will take the captain's head in his jaws. Jungle bred lions will eat raw meat from Captain Nicardo's mouth.

The band starts up again, the oboe and drum sounding above the brasses. The brasses drop out. Weird dreamy tune sways the blacks. They roll their eyes, some move their lips.

A big mulatto man steps out from the swaying blacks. He folds his arms and throws his head back, stands by himself, a statue cut in yellow stone. On his bare arms and neck mounts and ridges of muscle, salient in the light of the gasoline torches.

Across the street, under the portico of the general store, Sheriff Floyd Jett and Steve Dodie, Marshal of Leeston, stand close together and watch the mulatto. Marshal Dodie frowns, but the sheriff's face is unmoved.

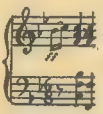
"Wonder where he's from," the sheriff says.

Marshal Dodie shakes his head.

"New nigger tuh me. An' tha hill niggers don't appear tuh know him."

"No, he isn't from the hills," Sheriff Jett says. "May be from the railroad."

"Must be. Huh! Walked fourteen miles tuh stand by hisself at a circus an' show off. Reckon he don't know how things in Leeston is run."

Sheriff Jett shifts his eyes from the mulatto to the platform by the main entrance. The spieler is helping a white woman on to the platform, saying something to her through the corner of his mouth that makes her smile. The woman wears flesh-colored tights and the curves of her body are clean-cut against the tent. Her yellow hair bound by a jeweled band catches the shifting light from the gasoline torch over her head. Points of light flash from her finger rings.

THE music stops again and the spieler talks loudly through the corner of his mouth. He shouts to the white folks in front of him that the woman on the platform is Madam Lorrine, the greatest equestrienne of the sawdust ring.

While the spieler is talking about Madam Lorrine the mulatto takes another step away from the blacks. The lone movement on the circus lot catches the eye of Madam Lorrine. She looks the mulatto up and down, then her eyes fly back to the white folks. The mulatto sees her look at him and unfolding his arms he passes a hand before his eyes. When his hand is taken away from his eyes there is a strange look in them. His nostrils spread and his head gives little jerks backward as they draw in air. The blacks and some of the whites are snuffing, too, inhaling the perfume that floats from the woman in flesh-colored tights on the platform.

The mulatto's eyes leave the woman on

the platform and fix themselves on the high-striker over at the edge of the lot, beyond the white folks. He looks up and down the red shaft several times and then, with his eyes still fixed on it, he walks around the crowd of whites and stands before the high-striker with his arms folded.

"Crazy nigger's a-fixin' tuh start trouble," Marshal Dodie says to the sheriff under the portico of the general store.

Sheriff Jett keeps his eyes on the mulatto and says nothing. He is thinking that the mulatto's head isn't like a nigger's and that his nose and lips aren't either. The sheriff thinks he has seen a head like the mulatto's before and his mind runs back. Back to his home, to the living-room in his home, to a picture on the wall of the living-room. The picture stands out clear in his mind, "The Discus-Thrower."

The spieler, standing beside the high-striker, suddenly shouts to the mulatto to hit 'em hard. The spieler swings the maul himself and sends the pointer up to five hundred.

"Ring the bell and it's free!"

His arms folded, the mulatto looks up and down the red shaft.

"Show me up, you," the spieler says and touches the mulatto's arm with the handle of the maul. The yellow statue comes to life. He takes the maul, swings it over his shoulder. His trunk bends and the mounts and ridges on him shift.

The music starts up again and the bare-back-riding woman in flesh-colored tights steps off the platform to the ground as the maul in the mulatto's hands descends and hits the pad at the bottom of the high-striker.

Shooting to the top of the shaft the pointer rings the bell. The ring of the high-striker bell fits into the rhythm of the oboe and drum. The maul makes another arc in the air and the bell rings again. Nothing but the trunk and arms of the mulatto moving, but the bell is ringing now as if it were part of the music of the one-ring show, tinkling through the wail of the oboe and the boom of the drum.

Whites and blacks are watching the mulatto with amazement, some with mouths wide open. The spieler on the platform and the spieler by the high-striker stand motionless. The oboe player and the drummer feel the high-striker bell in the rhythm and play with more vigor. The bareback-riding woman stands transfixed by the main entrance.

Under the portico across the street Sheriff Jett says—

"My ——!"

The Leeston marshal purses his lips.

The mulatto takes one hand from the maul. He is swinging the maul now with one arm. Only his trunk and one arm moving but the high-striker bell doesn't lose a beat. Wail, ring and boom. The mulatto's face with the sheen of sweat on it shines under the light of a gasoline torch.

Suddenly the mulatto drops the maul at the spieler's feet and his eyes sweep the circus lot. He sees the whites and blacks watching him and the woman in flesh-colored tights standing by the main entrance, amazement still on her face. He rubs his eyes two or three times and then walks over back of the crowd of white folks, folds his arms and leans up against a fence.

With shouts the spieler begins to tear off tickets from the roll in his hand and offers them to the front line of whites. But they are shifting their feet now and whispering among themselves. White men glance back over their shoulders at the lone yellow man, grim glances and whisperings flash back and forth over the show lot. White women with fright in their eyes clutch their men and jerk them forward to buy tickets, but the men pull back.

Over by the circus wagons the blacks draw into a tighter knot or lose themselves in the shadows. The background is studded with a hundred white eyes. White folks shift their feet and turn their heads, but the blacks move only their eyes that gleam from the gasoline torches.

Marshal Dodie steps out from under the portico of the general store and starts to cross the street to the mulatto but Sheriff Jett grabs his arm and pulls him back. Steve Dodie grows red and oaths fly out of his mouth. Amazement is in his eyes as he faces the sheriff. He can't understand why the sheriff allows the yellow man to get by with what he did, showing up white folks and then walking off and standing like a monument all by himself. Marshal Dodie is dumfounded at Sheriff Jett. Trouble ought to be checked right in the beginning, the first signs stamped out. Mountain men across the street in front of the circus tent whispering, may be gathering themselves

into a mob, and the sheriff not wanting to do anything about it.

"WAIT," says Sheriff Jett.

Marshal Dodie laughs a dry laugh and shakes his head. The sheriff saying wait and a race war about to begin. Rifles in all the wagons along the five roads entering Leeston, mountain men and Leeston men nodding their heads at each other and the county officer telling the marshal of Leeston to wait. Crazy nigger about to run amuck and a crazy sheriff standing still and saying, "wait."

Sheriff Jett doesn't pay any attention to the marshal's laugh or the flushed signs on his face. The sheriff knows that the marshal hasn't any reason for arresting the mulatto—yet. The mulatto hasn't broken any law, not even a "Jim Crow" law. The blacks over by the wagons know that. They don't like what the mulatto did, and are afraid because he showed up the white folks, but they know he hasn't broken any law.

With flushed face Marshal Dodie is glowing at the mulatto; the marshal's face twitches and he taps his legs with his fingers. The mulatto standing in the circus lot by himself with folded arms and head thrown back is gall to the marshal. Sheriff Jett understands this. The sheriff sees the hate in the marshal's eyes, too—same blind hate that has driven all the blacks out of Leeston, driven them to the railroad towns and to the hills. The sheriff knows that his stopping the marshal from taking the mulatto in tow is gall piled on gall, the bitterest gall of all for the marshal to swallow. Steve Dodie is marshal, police chief of Leeston. He isn't under the authority of the sheriff, but he has allowed himself to be pulled back under the portico by him and told what to do.

Across the street the circus band is getting down from the platform and going into the tent. The spieler is calling through the corner of his mouth for the white folks to buy tickets. He is waving tickets before the white folks' eyes. But the men don't make a move. Leeston women and mountain women tug at the sleeves of their men, their young pout and whine, but the men are still whispering among themselves, still throwing looks over their shoulders at the mulatto standing all alone.

Suddenly Sheriff Jett steps out from under the portico of the general store and crosses the street to the circus lot. He passes in front of the whites, between the whites and the main entrance of the show, nodding and smiling at them. He stops to shake hands with two gaunt mountain men and urges them to buy tickets. They nod and step up to the spieler's box and lay down two-bit pieces. The crowd moves forward now, snapping the tension. The nasal drawl of the spieler is drowned out by the band playing inside the tent. The whites are crowding now, pushing from behind.

When the white folks are all in the tent, the blacks over by the wagons move forward a few steps and look at Sheriff Jett who stands by the platform. He motions for them to come forward. They grin as they approach. The men doff their hats and the women show their teeth as they step up beside the sheriff and lay their money on the spieler's box.

The tick of every two-bit piece on the box tells Sheriff Jett something, tells him that the blacks as well as whites have been saving up their money for a long time to see the one-ring show, the first wagon show that has ever been able to make its way over the sticky red clay roads from the railroad to Leeston.

When the blacks are all inside the tent the sheriff lights a stogie and glances across the street. He sees the marshal of Leeston still standing under the portico, frowning at the mulatto. The marshal's badge catches the light of the gasoline torches. He has moved it from his shirt to the outside of his coat since the sheriff left him.

In slow, short steps, as if he were feeling his way, the mulatto advances across the lot toward the circus entrance. He stops every few feet and rubs his eyes and looks around like he is lost. When he comes close to the sheriff and lays his money on the spieler's box for a ticket, the sheriff sees that the mulatto's eyes are dull. In the light from the gasoline torches the whites of his eyes have no luster.

The mulatto walks slowly into the tent. The spieler leans over his box as he glimpses the sheriff's star under his coat. The corner of the spieler's mouth opens.

"Loco! Where's that yellow Samson from?"

"Don't know."

The sheriff buys a ticket and follows the mulatto into the tent. The mulatto is standing by the roped-in ring, looking first at the whites then at the blacks. At last he rubs his eyes and walks down the sawdust-covered ground past the white folks' seats to the end of the tent where the blacks are huddled together. He sits down a little away from them. The blacks draw closer together as the mulatto seats himself at their edge on the first tier of boards.

A few of the whites eye him, whispering; then stop as a clown turns cart-wheels into the show ring.

Sheriff Jett sits down on the first tier of board seats where the seats begin to curve around at the end of the tent. The sheriff is sitting at the edge of the white folks; the mulatto at the edge of the blacks. Fifteen feet of bare board seats are between them. Fifteen feet of no man's land.

A man and woman, both in white tights, come out of an open flap in the tent near where the band is seated and make their way to the sawdust ring. They step out of their slippers and pull themselves up a rope hand over hand to two trapezes under the roof of the tent. They sit on the trapezes and wipe their hands with handkerchiefs and look down at the net that is stretched taut under them.

Steve Dodie, the Leeston marshal, comes into the tent and seats himself between two white men on the first tier of boards, hangs his hands over his knees and frowns under his broad-brimmed hat.

The band plays, and the man and woman on the trapezes begin swinging by their knees. The woman leaves her trapeze and sails through the air. When the man's hands grab hers, whites and blacks open their eyes wider. Some jump and cry out.

THE mulatto man looks at the blacks on his right, then turns his head and looks up and down the crowd of whites on his left. He rubs his eyes and looks at his arms. He holds one arm up close to his eyes and picks it with his fingers. His fingers pull the skin of his arm and his eyes squint at it. Again he looks from one white face to another and suddenly slides over on the board seat a foot, toward the whites, toward Sheriff Jett.

Near where the mulatto sits, between him and the sheriff, there is a lap in the board seat and when the mulatto slides over toward it the sheriff fixes a cleavage there in his mind, a dead-line half way between the blacks and whites.

The music stops, and the man and woman come down the rope from the trapezes, bow and step into their slippers. A blast from a trumpet brings out a white horse with pink eyes from the opening in the tent near the band. The white horse canters into the ring, and the woman in flesh-colored tights is brought out by another blast from the trumpet. She steps out of her slippers at the ringside and leaps to the horse's back. The band plays a waltz.

Spangles on the white horse's girth and check and his pink eyes glitter under the torches. The woman's burnished hair and the sheen of her flesh-colored tights glitter as she dances on the rump of the horse. The circus ring is sprayed with color, and the contour of the bareback rider is outlined against the sloping roof of the circus tent.

Whites and blacks stare at the woman dancing on the cantering horse. Sheriff Jett throws her a glance; then looks back to the mulatto whose eyes leave the bareback rider and look at his arm. The mulatto is pulling at the skin of his arms again and squinting at it. He looks up and down the tiers of whites and suddenly moves over toward them another foot. A foot nearer the dead-line the sheriff's mind has fixed on the board seat.

Sheriff Jett knows that if the mulatto makes one more slide toward the white folks he will have to take him out of the show tent and start him back toward the railroad, quick. The sheriff draws in his feet and clutches the edge of the board seat with both hands.

The mulatto's lusterless eyes are fixed on the woman again. As she rides around the ring she throws a glance at him, a quick glance but the mulatto catches it. He picks at the skin of his yellow arm, squinting at it. When he lifts his eyes again they look at the white folks familiarly, look familiarly at Sheriff Jett.

The familiar look in the mulatto's eyes brings Sheriff Jett to his feet. He takes a step toward the mulatto, who slides over toward him. A flame jets out from the topmost row of whites. The report freezes the action in the circus ring.

Clutching his breast the mulatto falls face forward. The whites sit still and whisper under the cloud of black powder smoke spreading out over their heads. Some of the blacks are paralyzed. Some drop down between the board seats to the ground and crawl out under the sides of the tent. Some pray. Some shout, "Lawd, Jesus! Come, Jesus!" A black woman laughs and reaches up in the air with both hands as if for a rope.

"I tole yuh so," Marshal Steve Dodie flings at Sheriff Jett and rushes over to the blacks, light glinting along the barrel of his nickled revolver.

"Some o' yuh niggers git tha yellow —— out o' there," the marshal yells.

Three black men race over the board seats. They reach down for the choking mulatto. But the sheriff holds up his hands. The mulatto is turning his head, his eyes are opening. They fix on Sheriff Jett. They are trying to say something.

The whites are rising to their feet, muttering.

"Hustle, yuh ——!" The marshal threatens with his gun.

The mulatto's eyes look up at the black faces over him and shrink away. They come to rest once more on the sheriff.

Sheriff Jett lays his hand on the marshal's shoulder, gently.

"Let him die white, Steve."

THE SEVEN CITIES OF CIBOLA

by EUGENE CUNNINGHAM

MARTIN DEHAIM'S planisphere, built in 1492 for the Portuguese, showed an "Island of Antilia" lying west of the Cape Verdes. He remarked that when the Arabs conquered Spain, to Antilia fled a Christian archibishop with some followers, to found "seven cities." So a legend of seven cities was current in Europe long before the conquest of America.

After the discovery of the West Indies, Antilia—*ante insula*—became "Antilles," the name of the whole chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea. The fabled seven cities were forgotten until about 1530 when de Guzman, then ruling Mexico, sought them and the equally mythical "Amazons." For ten years afterward they were prominent in the Spaniards' golden dreams. They continually cross-examined the Indians and, it would seem, believed all they wished to believe.

Cabeza de Vaca reached Sinaloa after wandering across the continent from Florida. He told tall stories of tall cities he had seen. But Mendoza, the Viceroy, if no less avaricious, was shrewder than the average Spaniard. Before dispatching an expensive expedition to loot these cities, he decided to send Fray Marcos, a Franciscan priest, with Estévanico, a negro soldier of de Vaca's, to look about.

So on March 7, 1539, Fray Marcos and some Pima Indians left Culiacan, northernmost Spanish settlement. Estévanico with other Pimas was sixty leagues in advance. The negro sent back messengers with glowing accounts. He had reached the first city of the country, called Cibola. This province held seven very large cities subject to one lord. The houses were large stone structures decorated with turquoises.

Following Estévanico, Fray Marcos was received cordially everywhere. The Indians roused his expectations by speaking of "provinces," "kingdoms" and houses of several stories; of the lovely green stones adorning these. But ahead Estévanico's greed had brought about his death. The Indians begged Fray Marcos to turn back, but he felt that he must at least look upon the fabled cities.

From a high hill he saw a valley containing several large villages, the nearest that in which Estévanico had died. The priest thought this village seemed "as large as the City of Mexico" and the people he saw were clothed in cotton. He set up a cross and returned to Mexico City.

Coronado outfitted an expedition and, guided by Fray Marcos conquered the cities of Cibola. But he found them mere Indian villages lacking gold or precious stones.

The myth was exploded, though there has been doubt as to the site of these cities. If no wealth was discovered still, through Coronado's search for the fabled empire, came the exploration and conquest of New Mexico.

Mumps

by J. D. Newsom

Author of "The Jade Ax," "Mud," etc.

THE Venitian blinds were drawn against the noonday glare, but enough light filtered through the chinks to enable the man sitting at the desk to see what he was doing, so long as he kept his head well down, almost on top of the sheet of note paper.

He wrote laboriously, using a blunt, hard lead-pencil, and he gripped it as if it were alive and anxious to escape. He was very hot. Perspiration gathered on his forehead and trickled down his nose. Then it fell on to the note paper, where it made round spots, like tear drops. These he carefully ringed with heavy, straggling pencil marks, nodding sadly as he did so.

In the middle of his forehead hung a limp spit curl that had ceased to be a spit curl several hours ago and now sagged dejectedly between his eyes like the tail of a drowned rat. Except for this one lock the rest of his hair was clipped short. Through the stubble his scalp showed astonishingly pink in contrast with his face, which was tanned the color of seasoned mahogany.

His damp forearms stuck to the blotting pad. Whenever he moved the blotting pad moved with him and had to be pulled away very carefully to keep it from tearing, for it was wet through.

Close to his right elbow, on the desk, lay a dusty riding boot and a heap of polishing rags.

From time to time bugle calls broke the drowzy stillness, but the man at the desk worked on with the same painstaking care. At last, however, the letter was finished. He put the pencil between his teeth and read aloud what he had written, staggering from word to word as if he were deciphering an intricate code.

"Dear Gertie,

Hoping this finds you as it leaves me with an awful black eye and a cut lip and two front teeth that have been knocked out, but otherwise in the pink even though this climate aint fit for a man what as been brought up to enjoy and apperciate a real Tooting fog, I am your devoted and loverly young man what as gone and done badly by himself, and I except you are walking out with that there carrot-top what brings the pork meat around to Mrs. Hibbertson's. But I will get him yet when I leave this terrible place in another two years and three months. May God in his mercy see me safe through this here dirty business and if you as affectionate regards for your most loverly young man you will send me a postal order for half a crown so as he wont starve to death. The rations in this here Foreign Legion are something fierce.

Yours truly,

ALBERT WITHERS. XXX.

P. S. I aint no stamps, so I am posting this without stamps, and it will cost you twice that much when the letter gets to you, but you are sure to get it, so all is all right. Yours, BERT. XX.

Again P.S. It was my officer what gave me the black eye and etc., and he is what I used to call your brother Tom's Yorkshire terrier. Ho, how I wish I was back in the King's Royal Rifles and had not deserted. Only one man here speaks good old

English, and he is an American, and he *says* his name is Mickey Curialo, which is funny, and he dont speak like anything you are likely ever to hear in Tooting. Yrs. BERTY. x

He sighed gustily as he folded the letter, which he shoved and pushed and finally jammed into an envelop, while he stared round-eyed toward the door. The gum on the flap of the envelop was damp, it caught at his fingers and stuck to the letter. The letter itself was too bulky to fit into the envelop. He attempted to put the whole mess in his pocket, but by that time all five fingers of his left hand were glued to the flap.

Footsteps sounded loudly in the passage on the other side of the door. He lunged toward the black riding boot on the desk and shoved his left arm into it up to the elbow. In his right hand he caught up the polishing rags and leaped away from the desk.

He was standing in the middle of the room when the door swung open and Captain Aristide Trudaine marched in with a stamp and a jingle.

Trudaine was large all over, big-featured, broad-shouldered, deep-chested. Even his square-cut blond beard was extra thick and its fringe swept the first button of his tunic. On his chest were medals, including the Academical Palms and the medal of the Society for the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases among Native Races. From the rowels of his spurs to the regimental crest on his *kêpi* he was as fine a specimen of a soldier of the old school as could be found anywhere in Algeria.

"What do you do here?" he demanded savagely, speaking in English—English which was strongly flavored with London cockney. "Do you not know that the place for the cleaning of boots is the bootery?"

Before his menacing eyes Albert Withers quailed and his head sank down between his shoulders. He seemed to grow smaller than ever and to shrink behind the green baize apron he wore over his uniform. After wetting his lips several times, he stammered:

"Bootery, sir? Yes, sir. Of course, sir, but seeing as 'ow I 'eard you coming down the 'all, I thought—"

"The lies!" exclaimed Trudaine. "The door to the bedchamber she is closed. You would not have closed her had you just come through. No! The blarsted lies!"

Two strides took him across to the desk. He bent down and examined the blotting pad.

"Ha!" he cried at sight of the telltale marks of moisture.

"Withers, you sacred liar of an Englishman, you sit in the study to clean the boots! Odious rascal of an Englishman, never will you make a good Legionaire, never!"

He caught up the damp pad and hurled it at Withers, who received it stoically full in the face.

"Here," went on Trudaine, "you have the good post with me, the chance to improve, and what do you do? You clean the boots at the expensive desk! I take you to teach me the English accent, but you are still a Legionaire, my friend, you 'ave the discipline to obey. Do not forget it."

"I ain't forgetting," mumbled Withers, blowing bits of red blotting paper off his lips. "I been dusting and fixing things in 'ere a bit."

"More of the lies." Trudaine became very calm. "The good valet he does not put his harms—arms on the table to dust, and the table is full of dust. Observe the pigeon-holes! Withers, you vexate me! It was to write a letter that you sat at the table. I see the disorder, do not fear. So you take my c r e s t e d note paper, eh? That—" he extended a long, thick, accusing arm at the culprit—"that is robbery!"

"Nossir!" protested Withers, "I ain't stolen nothing. Not a thing, so help me, sir."

"Stand perfectly tranquil," ordered Trudaine. "I will excavate your pockets."

WITHERS stood petrified. He knew the man he was dealing with, and the man was dangerous. When there were no witnesses about Trudaine never hesitated to use his fists if the mood seized him. For over a year he had made of Withers' life a hell on earth, and the little cockney had endured it only because he forgot easily and let the morrow take care of itself. Sometimes he was punched on the jaw, but, on the other hand, he had to attend only one parade a day and was occasionally rewarded with an extra franc or so.

And the trouble was that none of the captain's fellow-officers even suspected him of being other than a genial, big-hearted, well-mannered gentleman. Of course, with the

rank and file he was something of a martinet, but in the Foreign Legion discipline was—well, discipline. But in private he could be charming. He had a fine voice, he waltzed and mazurkaed with grace, played whist excellently, and knew how to make conversation. In mess and in the private homes of Sidi-bel-Abbes he was always in demand; even his colonel liked him. Moreover, one of his uncles was a departmental prefect, so that he was politically and socially all right.

If an orderly had brought a complaint against him, that orderly would probably have spent the next five years of his life breaking stones on the highways of Algeria as an unpaid guest of the disciplinary battalion.

The pockets of Withers' tunic yielded one lead-pencil, a jew's-harp, a comb in a celluloid case, one brass button and a pair of round-edged dice, but no incriminating correspondence.

Trudaine grunted.

"Elevate your arms," he snapped. "I will inspect the pantaloons."

In the right-hand pocket he found three copper sous tied in the corner of a cotton handkerchief. He swore bitterly and delved into the left-hand pocket. It was empty except for a large hole. Withers suddenly writhed.

"I said, 'Remain without movement,'" Trudaine said harshly. "Have you become like a snake?"

"'Ow kin I stay still," retorted Withers, a wild and despairing look in his eyes, "'ow kin I stay still when I gets tickled?"

"He talks of the tickle!" moaned Trudaine, shaking his fists at the ceiling. "By the blimey, I do not play with you. But you will render me crazy with this tickle-talk. In the Henglish—English army perhaps they do the tickle, but me, I am in the great earnest. I do not joke. I have accuse you of robbery. I must prove the robbery. My honor is at the post!"

Withers, looking more insignificant than ever, stood meekly before him, round-shouldered and sweating. He seemed ready to burst into tears. Trudaine, fists on hips, feet planted wide apart, looked down at him for some time and finally gave a short laugh.

"Miserable creature," he said, "you think you have trick me, you think I am deceive. It is not so! This time I let you go with the rebuke because—" he carried both hands to his face, dramatically—"because I am very sick in the jaw. My head burn. I have the illness!"

He turned away and threw himself down on a couch in a corner of the room.

"Remove my shoes," he ordered in a strangled voice. "The malady becomes very dolorous. Remove my shoes and go pray the physician to attend me."

Withers' legs almost collapsed beneath him. He looked at Trudaine, then at the riding boot he still wore on his left arm. He sidled toward the door leading to the scullery..

"Sorry yer sick, sir," he mumbled. "I'll just be putting this 'ere boot where hit belongs—"

Trudaine was really sick and feverish. His throat was very sore and getting worse each minute, but this merely made him a little more cantankerous than usual. He propped himself up on his elbow and barked:

"Obey my order on the instant! Put down that boot and remove these shoes from off my feet. Imbecile, do you not perceive that I am in the grip of a grave malady? My head boils! Make haste!"

His red and swollen face was awe-inspiring. Withers dragged himself to the couch. With his one spare hand he fumbled with the laces of the captain's shoes. Amazed, Trudaine watched him try to use the sole of the riding boot as if it were a hand. The job was not a success. After having been rapped on the shin three times Trudaine grabbed Withers by the shoulder shook and him.

"Dolt and buffoon!" he said furiously, "let fall that boot or I will give you the what-ho-she-bumps, as you say."

"Sir!" protested Withers. "Sir, captain, sir! You ain't got no manner of right to 'andle me like—"

But Trudaine had no intention of arguing with his orderly. He heaved himself to his feet and, taking hold of Withers by the collar of his tunic, twisted it vigorously until Withers choked.

"Abandon the boot!" he rasped.

Withers obeyed. The boot dropped with a bump onto the fiber carpet and fell over on its side. The envelop and its contents were still glued to Withers' fingers.

"Ah!" sighed Trudaine. "At last I have save my honor."

He tore the letter off Withers' hand and went back to the couch. He read the

message slowly, with grim satisfaction, while Withers stood miserably in the middle of the room, too dazed to think, picking bits of sticky paper off his fingers.

From time to time Trudaine grunted and when he reached the end of the message he remarked:

"You are the nasty, small beast, eh what, Withers? You ask this Gertie for money—and yet you do not know if Gertie still recollects you. You 'ave no morals. And you pretend to make tears, you species of an alligator! And you say you 'ave—have no money, yet I have find three whole sous in your pocket. Yes, you are the liar.

"My throat is atrocious," he went on. "I will not be capable of attending at Madame Chaillot's party tonight. Do not prepare the grand uniform. Withers—hm—I do not esteem you at all. You say I give you the black eye, etcetra—that is treason. You must talk only of the grandeur of the regiment. A Legionaire must have respect for the regiment, respect for the flag. I am sick now but when I am better I will maybe have you expedited to prison, my friend. I keep the letter. When I am recuperated I attend to the matter!

"And what is this?" He was in a cold rage, and his voice shook as he spoke. "What is it that you call the dog of the brother of Gertie? Answer me at once! I will 'ave an answer!"

"I called it Rover, sir," gulped Withers, twisting his fingers together.

Trudaine looked at him intently for a second or so, then lay back on the couch. He said wearily—

"I can not make use of the vocal cords longer, so remove my shoes with quickness, and then proceed to the physician's."

Withers obeyed automatically. He never expected to see Tooting Common again, and his soul was dead within him. He would be sent, he felt sure, to the Zephirs, the dreaded disciplinary battalion, where stronger men than he were quickly broken in the course of a few short weeks—and the least he might expect from the court martial would be a twelve-month sentence. Men who had survived the Zephirs often had a skull and cross-bones tattooed on their forehead to show that they had been face to face with Death, and conquered it.

He thought of deserting, until he remembered what the Moroccan tribesmen across the border did to Legionaires found wandering empty-handed and athirst through the desert. Such remains, when found, were always photographed, and the proofs distributed among the Legionaires at Sidi-bel-Abbes. This practise tended to restrict desertion to the strict minimum.

THE canteen was crowded when, shortly after five, Withers elbowed his way through the groups standing between the tables and fought his way toward the bar that ran the whole width of the room.

A vast woman in skin-tight black bombazine stood behind the counter. She had three chins, a mustache, and shoe-button eyes. Her expression was one of extreme severity and austere virtue. An amiable Legionaire once had called her "the daughter of the regiment." She had reported that Legionaire, and his gallantry was rewarded with ten days' confinement to barracks.

She sold wine by the bottle at three sous the liter, and nothing but wine, for the pay of the Legionaire is only one cent a day. He can not afford such luxuries as stale beer, and only rarely, after many days of privation, can he scrape together enough money to go in town and buy himself a shot of native *bapeli*, or sawdust gin.

For this cent a day he fights recklessly, he dies of disease in pestiferous outposts, and in between times he makes roads, builds houses, drains rivers, and performs other useful services. The lowest paid coolie labor can not compete with him, and he can, moreover, be put to tasks a coolie would turn away from in disgust.

When he reached the bar, Withers carefully retrieved his three sous from the corner of his handkerchief and shoved them across the counter. Without a word the *cantinière* clapped her right hand down on the money, while with her left she shoved a bottle of red wine at Withers.

He struggled clear of the jam and, clutching the bottle to his chest, sought a vacant spot where he might either sit or stand to drink without being trodden underfoot.

The room was thick with smoke, the heat was stifling. A dozen languages were being shouted at once above the rattle and clatter of bottles and tin mugs. The majority of the men were either German or Alsatian, with a sprinkling of Swedes and coffee-colored Portuguese and Belgians for good measure.

A man standing against the wall by the door, his tunic hanging open, was singing *Die Wacht am Rhine*, in a raucous voice. Near-by a couple of troopers beat their fists on the table and, face close to face, bawled abuse at each other over a spilt wine bottle.

Withers dodged through the press until he reached the back of the room. A tall Legionaire with a long upper lip, which gave him a glum, judicial appearance, caught Withers by the shoulder as he went by.

"Where to?" he inquired. "Going to split that bottle?"

" 'Adn't thought of doing so," retorted Withers. "Cost me my larst three sous, it did."

"Well, I guess there's more'n enough for two," the Legionaire said placidly. "I got a man-sized thirst on, take it from me. We hiked forty-eight kilometers today, with full packs. Hot! Boy howdy!"

"*Hif* you 'ad a full pack, Curialo," Withers flashed back, "I'll eat my shirt. I been soldiering too long not to know a lead-swinger when I sees one."

Curialo smiled sadly.

"For a limey you're right smart," he admitted. "Sure, I stuffed the old pack with paper—same's anybody else with any brains 'ud do. What's the odds? I got a mouthful of dust just the same. Forty-eight kilos! And you, you —— flunkey, all you been doing is polishing the silver and combing old Trudaine's —— beard. Pretty soft for you! I'll bet Goldy-Locks lies on a divan in a silk kimono while you give him a facial treatment." He snatched the bottle out of Withers' arms. "Thanks for the drink," he added between gulps. "Not bad stuff."

"Hi, leave us a bit," yelped Withers. "It's me larst three sous, that is, and I 'ad a rough day myself."

"Sure, leaving you lots," promised Curialo, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "But you can't keep a thirsty man waiting all night. And say, what's this dope about Trudaine being sick? I got the yarn from the stable lines. Colonel's groom got it from the company cook. Is the —— going to croak?"

" 'Im kick the bucket?" Withers said scornfully, after having carefully drained the bottle. "Not much! 'E'll live to be the death of me, 'e will. Crickey! I'm due for the Zephs, I am. 'E's sick all right just now," he sighed, "but 'e's sure to get well."

"What's his trouble—cholera?"

Withers spat on the floor.

" 'E's got a blinking kid's disease," he snorted, "but 'e calls it a something or other of the something gland. It's just plain mumps."

"That's catching, ain't it?"

"So they say."

"Well, maybe we'll all get it," Curialo said hopefully. "But what are you doing away from your master, my bold flunkey? Don't he need you to hold his hand, or has he tired of your winning ways?"

" 'E's asleep," explained Withers, "and I 'ad to answer roll-call and get a bite to eat. 'E don't want it known what's ailing 'im, so 'e told the doctor. 'E says it's childish, which it is. I ain't supposed to be away from 'im, but I took a charnce, me being fed up on 'im today. 'E keeps groaning like as if 'e was really sick! 'E's mean, 'e is. As soon as 'e gets well 'e's to 'ave me court martialed. Until that fateful momint I kin slave my —— 'eart hout for 'im."

"That's a good line," approved Curialo. "What you been doing—pinching his medals?"

"It's like this," explained Withers, and for the next fifteen minutes he talked breathlessly, without a single noticeable pause or break, punctuating every sentence with the inevitable, "and he says to me, he says," or "and I says to him, I says."

Curialo listened asttentively, his head cocked a little on one side. His eyes had a far-away look in them, and at last a slow, sad smile dawned on his face.

"Yep, that guy is one——," he summed up. "He's the —— who sent me to the cooler for two weeks because he *said* there was a speck of rust on my breech-bolt. He's the —— who had me tied by the armpits to the back of the water cart and dragged half way across Africa, that time near Tlemcen when the sun got me. Yea, bo! I got his number all right. I soldiered with him at Bac Leh in the Tonkin, and he's a yellow pup. I'd like to do him dirt."

" 'Ere, 'ere!" chirruped Withers manfully. "I could put 'awlf a bayonet inside of 'im—but that 'ud be murder."

"That rough stuff don't go good with me—and what's more you don't mean it. Go on! You wouldn't hurt a white mouse, let alone the big fellow. But I got a swell idea, *compadre*, and it's painless. We're going to railroad that guy. Get that? Let it soak

in. If my little scheme goes good, tomorrow morning will see the sad, sad finish of one officer and a—"

"Dream on!" advised Withers, "you're safe. It's poor blokes like me what's got to face the fac's of life. Yus! Next week I'll be in the Zephs and most likely buried out there in the burning sands."

"That's another pretty good line," observed Curialo. "Say, I thought you was a soldier, once. Ain't you got any guts atall?"

"I was in the K. R. Rs., I'll 'ave you know," snapped Withers, drawing himself up, "and I'd still be with 'em and probably be a lance-corpril if the battalion 'adn't been ordered to India."

"And then what?"

"Well, there was that bit of crackling, I was telling you of, Gertie. Crazy I was about 'er, so I deserted. Made a —— outcast of myself, I did, and she ups and walks hout with the pork butcher's boy—striped apron and all. God! 'Ow I wisht I was in India now! Houtposts of Hempire! I'm a Briton and proud of it, too—"

"I know the chorus to that one," Curialo said quickly. "They use a gag like that where I come from. But listen; come outside one minute, where it's quiet. This scheme looks rosy to me. Come along!"

HE DRAGGED Withers out of doors. The great parade ground was empty except for a handful of Legionaires in white fatigue uniforms, who were slowly gathering up burnt match ends and bits of paper under the supervision of a loud-mouthed corporal. The level rays of the sun fell full on the yellow walls of the barracks buildings. In the open casements of the windows a few men sat cleaning their accouterments. They were defaulters who, in a minute or so, in answer to a bugle call, would have to dash across to the guard house and answer their names.

Most of the Legionaires were out of barracks, walking aimlessly about the streets of Sidi-bel-Abbes, or spending their few sous in doubtful cafés over in the native quarter or the Ghetto, where alone they were welcome. In the better parts of town Legionaires were not wanted at all.

Curialo caught Withers by the arm and marched him up and down. He talked in a harsh undertone.

"Listen," he said, "there's not a man in the whole of bel-Abbes who'd give two cents for Trudaine. I mean, not a single Legionaire. They know what kind of a guy he is. And everybody knows he's sick. So we're sitting pretty. We're going to frame him good and plenty. He's in bed, you say?"

" 'E's sick and 'e's in bed, and that —— letter of mine is under 'is pillow," grunted Withers, "and I 'opes as 'ow 'e chokes, but 'e won't, blarst 'im."

"Now then." Curialo halted suddenly and faced Withers. "Could you pinch his uniform?"

"Uh? Pinch 'is *hu*niform? My ——! What next?"

"If you can get it the rest is dead easy. You said he was going to a party?"

"Yus, at Madame Chaillot's. 'Er old man sells us poor blokes bad meat, and 'e's got a daughter what 'ud like to be—"

"Later, later," urged Curialo. "That can wait. And this is a flash party, eh? Wait!" As Withers opened his mouth. "I know it is. And say, is Trudaine all bandaged up?"

"Yus, 'e is. Stuff round 'is —— ears and 'is throat, and it keeps falling down in his eyes and climbs up in his mouth, and he curses me because I ain't no —— nurse."

Curialo began to walk up and down again, talking as he went along.

"You know Krause, the heinie in the second platoon?"

"Yus."

"He's a big guy. And he's got a blond beard just like Goldy-Locks, and the same kind of baby-blue eyes. See what I'm driving at—see?"

"No."

"You dumb Britisher! Listen: We'll dress Krause up in Trudaine's glad rags and take him over to Madame what's-her-name. First we'll buy him a couple of snorters of *bapeli*—I got the cash, you can pay me later—that'll make him all pepped up, and he'll do just as I tell him to. And when I get through Trudaine'll have just one thing left to do—and that's resign."

"Ooooo," breathed Withers. "But 'ow—but, blimey man, Krause 'e's balmy. 'E ain't quite all right in the 'ead. You know 'ow he goes about saluting lamp-posts and such-like, and 'e's getting worse."

"Leave him to me," Curialo said with great confidence. "I can handle him. Trudaine socked him one month in the

Zephs not so long ago, and he's still thinking about the hard time he had down there."

For the first time in years Withers cackled with laughter. He held his sides and bent almost double.

"Ow my," he gurgled. "Ow my! Just think of it, now, will you! Old Krause dressed up as the captain and butting in on a society party—Krause drunk—"

"Tell the whole wide world!" sneered Curialo. "Shut up for a second, will you? Can you get the uniform?"

"I'm sure I can," agreed Withers. "Ow my, what a lark!"

"I don't know much about birds," retorted Curialo, "and this thing has got to be worked slick. You'll stay with the old man and smooth his swollen face. I'll get Krause. You fetch the uniform now."

"I'll bring it down in the linen bawskit. Meet me by the wagon sheds in an hour. 'Ow's that?"

"Fair enough. Now beat it!"

Curialo watched Withers trot across the parade ground toward the officers' wing, and then went in search of Krause. He found the gloomy Bavarian leaning against the door of the cantine.

"Want a drink?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Humph!" said Krause over his shoulder.

"Stand you a couple of drinks," suggested Curialo.

"Bah!" said Krause, who did not yet believe in fairies.

"That's fine. Come on over here a ways. I want to talk to you—about Trudaine."

Krause began to show signs of interest. He took his hands from his pockets and combed his beard with his fingers. After a few seconds' reflection he heaved himself away from the wall and lumbered along through the growing darkness after Curialo. Ever since he had been condemned to a month in the disciplinary battalion the mere mention of Trudaine's name had been enough to make him almost active. Otherwise he was silent and lived in a strange world of his own.

He listened attentively to Curialo's plan, nodding his head in slow time.

"Very good," he said at last. "I do it."

"I'll be with you, see?" added Curialo. "Right behind you, and I'll tell you what to do."

"Very good," repeated Krause. "I do it. I get even with that —— Trudaine."

"Here's your chance. Let's go."

Later Withers met them by the wagon sheds, behind the main block of buildings. He was trembling violently and his face showed pasty white in the light of the lantern hung by the door.

"I got to get back," he whispered. "'E's awful tonight. Mean! Blimey, 'e nags like an old woman. Been telling me what's ahead of me and reading me bits out of my own letter! You go hon and drag 'is name in the mud, and for ——'s sake 'ave that uniform back 'ere before lights out."

"I'll bring it back dead or alive, Chawles," promised Curialo. "Get back on the job and keep quiet. At a quarter to ten we'll be here. And after that all we'll have to do is sit back and be happy."

Withers vanished. Krause said nothing. He was busy loosening the buttons of his tunic and kicking off his shoes.

KRAUSE, now fully dressed in the uniform and insignia of a captain of the Foreign Legion, swung bear-like from foot to foot.

"For the love of Mike," swore Curialo, "stand still a minute while I fix these bandages."

"Boots," Krause grumbled. "They pinch."

"Then for ——'s sake, let 'em pinch!"

He nearly strangled the Bavarian with a strip of surgical dressing and made the bandage fast with a safety pin.

"Aggrh!" said Krause, somewhere at the back of his throat.

"We ain't through yet. We got to cover more of that *gesichte* of yours. You're handsome, but you don't look like the skipper—not yet."

He swathed Krause's face in lint, leaving exposed only the eyes and the nose—and the square-cut beard.

"You'll do," he said at last. "But you got to walk heel and toe for the next few hours. Step out—put some pep into it. Brace your shoulders back. See what I mean?"

"*Ya*, do we drink now?"

"Sure. March straight out through the gates. Don't forget to answer the sentry's salute, and go to Steffani's in the Ghetto. That'll be a good place to start. When I come in behind you, ask me to have a drink, see? And don't talk much. Your voice is all wrong; keep it in the background."

"Steffani's," repeated Krause. "I know it. Very good. Well, I go now."

He stepped out, swinging his arms, and Curialo nearly laughed outright, for the clumsy Bavarian seemed transformed. He marched briskly, giving a good imitation of Trudaine's martial and somewhat pompous bearing.

Curialo followed at a respectful distance. While Krause stalked straight across the parade ground, Curialo kept close to the wall. At the gateway the sentry sprang to attention and brought his rifle to the salute with a clatter. Krause answered the salute with a slight flick of the gloves he carried in his hand, and passed on.

"He is sick, isn't he?" the sentry whispered to Curialo as the latter came through the gate. "And he is going out with his head all done up like a ball of twine."

"Yes, I heard he was sick," Curialo answered without much interest. "Wonder where he's going?"

"Going to see his— Clear out, if you're going to town! Here comes the —— sergeant."

Curialo moved on, disappearing in the black shadows beneath the trees lining the Avenue Sadi Carnot.

It was a warm evening. The avenue, which led to the bandstand, was crowded with European families "taking the fresh air," after their supper. One and all they turned to watch the pseudo-captain stride along in the full glare of the arc lamps. At a distance his bandaged face gave him the appearance of a leper, and a ripple of surprized comment gathered behind him.

"It is Captain Trudaine. One had heard that he was indisposed. Yes, and a contagious malady. It is remarkable that he should be out."

"He is shameless!" This as Krause turned off the avenue into a mean, little street leading to the Ghetto.

"Indeed, yes. He goes to see a friend no doubt. What a scandal! Even the officers give the bad example today!"

Curialo listened and smiled all to himself as he walked modestly along, looking neither to right nor to left. He, too, turned into the mean, little street, and at once the crowd changed. Europeans were few and seedy; fat black Jews rubbed shoulders with lean Moroccans; Arabs, muffled in their white *burnous*, sat huddled in the doorway of dark and narrow shops; half naked negroes and wholly naked children swarmed everywhere.

Half a dozen Legionaires and as many Spahis passed Krause. They saluted him and stared after him in stupid astonishment. An officer—the great Trudaine—wandering through the slums of bel-Abbes! It was epoch making!

When Curialo reached Steffani's, a dirty, ill-lighted shanty at the bottom of a filth-littered passage, the place was dead-still. Five Legionaires, two Senegalese Tirailleurs, Steffani himself, one half-caste waiter and three waitresses, stood in their tracks, staring at Krause as if he were a ghost.

For an eternity nothing happened, no one moved, then Krause rapped his knuckles on the table and bellowed:

"*A boire!* To drink!"

Still no one moved.

"Don't you know me?" he thundered, and Curialo was astonished at the change in the man's voice. "Do you think I am a camel that you stare at me like this?"

The *patron* was first to recover his presence of mind. An unctuous smirk appeared on his greasy lips. He waddled forward, waving his hands, palms upturned.

"The place is yours, *Capitaine!* It is an honor, an incredible, unspeakable honor that the so famous Captain Trudaine should cross the threshold of the Café Steffani! Steffani is sensible to this great honor. He will rename his establishment! He will call it the *Café du Capitaine!* Shall I order these soldiers to evacuate the premises, Captain?"

"They can please themselves," retorted Krause, throwing himself on a bench in a dark corner of the room. "I have the mumps, by ——! Whoever fears mumps may get out, and I'll give him a month in solitary confinement. Now then, bring on your *bapeli!*"

A grizzled Legionaire giggled self-consciously, like a schoolgirl. The two black troopers, unable to stand the awful strain, all at once emitted a shriek of dismay and bolted out of the café. The others stood about awkwardly, wondering whether they ought to salute or stand to attention or sit down.

Steffani placed a whole bottleful of *bapeli* and a fairly clean glass jam jar in front of Krause.

"*Voilà, mon Capitaine,*" he gushed, thinking of the blackmail to come. "Will you

condescend to drink the health of this humble place of refreshment?"

"Alone?" snarled Krause behind his bandages. "Me drink alone, you lousy ——? Give every man a bottle of this gut-twister! We'll all drink together!"

This unexpected development did not fit in at all with Curialo's plans. Time was slipping away and there was much to be done. Moreover, at any moment some one might come in who would see through Krause's very poor disguise, and the whole thing would fall flat.

He edged over toward Krause and, with his back turned to the other Legionaires, winked vigorously several times. This had no effect, so he let the cigaret he held in his hand drop to the floor and, as he bent to pick it up, he whispered:

"Say, you bonehead, tie a can to that stuff, will you? We got to be moving. Get outside those drinks and let's go. Not more than two shots, mind!"

Krause's blue eyes stared at him coldly. The captain's raucous voice bellowed:

"Why aren't you drinking, you —— Yankee? Steffani, a bottle for the American Legionaire!"

Bapeli is a fiery, vile decoction, specially distilled to appeal to the native palate, which is non-corrosive and heat-proof. Its effect on the white man's brain is immediate and lethal.

Before many minutes had passed the five Legionaires had fully recovered from their amazement. Two of them were dancing the Prussian counterpart of a Highland fling; the others, unaware of the performance, were playfully beginning to break the furniture.

Krause took but two drinks. His blue eyes glittered more coldly than ever. He left his seat and headed toward Steffani, who was trying to tone down the playfulness of the Legionaires.

Curialo grabbed him by the arm as he brushed by.

"Quit it," he implored. "Quit it! This ain't no time for such goings on. We—"

Krause shook himself free.

"This house," he answered in a deep voice, "is a bad place. I am going to close it!"

Curialo made one last desperate effort to drag Krause away. The Bavarian turned upon him and hit him one blow. It landed squarely on the point of Curialo's chin and for a while he lay on the floor and was trampled on. When he came to the café was wrecked. Steffani lay draped across the counter like a bundle of old clothes, and the waitresses were huddled together in a corner, screaming.

The Legionaires had broken the lock to the wine bin and were celebrating their victory. Krause, armed with a broken chair leg, prodded Curialo in the chest.

"Get up!" he ordered. "We go now."

CURIALO got up. It dawned upon him that Krause was quite mad. He began to wish he had left the whole business well enough alone.

Outside, in the alley, Krause said:

"We go to find a patrol now, and have that place shut up. Did you see those —— Legionaires in there?"

"I did," agreed Curialo, "but, Krause, be reasonable. We're going to this Madame Chaillot's and—"

"Krause!" thundered the Bavarian. "Name of a pig, I am Captain Aristide Trudaine! For the present I need you as an escort. If you run away I will strangle you!"

"All right, all right!" agreed Curialo, anxious to get out of the reeking alley. "You're supposed to be going to this party—"

"First we find the patrol," insisted Krause. "We must have discipline. Business before pleasure, always."

They found a patrol without much difficulty, for the entire population of the alley had rushed out as soon as the fracas began, and were clamoring for help. The sergeant in charge of the patrol spotted the three gold stripes on cuffs and *kepi*, and the square-cut blond beard. That was sufficient identification. He saluted.

"Five men down there, drunk!" barked Krause. "I have been investigating. Lock them up. Lock up the owner. Put 'em all under arrest."

"Very well, Captain."

"And, why in —— were you so slow getting here?"

"We came in quick time, as soon as we heard the commotion," answered the sergeant, pointing to his panting men.

"Too slow! Too slow! And don't talk so much. When you come off duty place yourself under arrest also—neglect of duty

and insubordination! Now go and round up those drunkards!"

The patrol jogged away followed by a crowd of yelling, squealing natives who completely blocked the alley.

"Now," Krause went on, turning to Curialo, "we go to this Madame Chaillot's. I will tell her what I think of her husband's spoiled meat!"

Curialo felt faint and sick. The thing was no longer a joke. He foresaw that one of two things was almost certain to happen; either Krause would murder him or they would be caught and court martialed.

As they hurried down an empty side-street Curialo hooked his foot between Krause's legs and tried to throw him, but the Bavarian caught himself just in time and whirled around upon his assailant.

He pinned Curialo's arms down to his sides and said coldly:

"Never do that again, do you hear? Next time I will kill you, for less than that. Now then, walk in front where I can see you!"

So Curialo walked in front, going very fast, and they came at last to the broader streets of the city where the Europeans lived. In the Rue Colbert they passed a sergeant-major who saluted with an ample gesture.

"You're under arrest!" shouted Krause, shaking his fist in the non-com's face. "Slovenly uniform, dirty boots—disgraceful!"

The sergeant-major stared into the eyes behind the bandage. He had heard the rumor that Trudaine was sick, and he decided to humor him.

"Yes, my captain," he said soothingly, "but it is very dark here. If you will inspect me by the light of that lamp, you will positively see that my uniform is strictly in accordance with—"

"Pig!" yelled Krause. "I have placed you under arrest. Don't argue with me. Go to the guard-house and wait for me there. Another word and you will go to the Zephs."

"But—"

Krause's boot cut the argument short. The sergeant-major picked himself out of the dust of the roadway and took himself off after one appalled glance over his shoulder. Quite a crowd had collected. A dozen whooping children followed the non-com's hurried retreat.

A civilian, accompanied by his wife, approached. This was the bank manager, and a friend of the Colonel's. He held out his hand—

"Ah, Captain Trudaine," he began, "we heard you were indisp—"

"Away, away! Out of my sight you pen-pusher and money-grabber! I am going to the Chaillot's to give them a piece of my mind," stormed Krause, waving his arms.

The couple fell back. The Bavarian marched off, scattering people to right and left. Curialo stayed as close at hand as possible. He could have escaped, but he had to have that uniform, otherwise the whole story would surely leak out. He decided to bide his time and at the first opportunity to crack Krause over the head with the hilt of his bayonet. If Krause refused to be reasonable he'd leave him to roam around in what underwear he possessed.

But no chance offered itself, and at last they reached the Rue de Saix where the Chaillot's lived.

"Listen, listen!" begged Curialo. "Go in there, take just one look at 'em all and beat it quick. That's enough. It's nine o'clock now."

"What I have to say will not take two minutes," Krause hinted darkly.

"There's sure to be officers in there," Curialo added. "So don't make a show of yourself. Make it snappy!"

"And am I not an officer?" demanded Krause.

"No, you *ain't!*" Curialo said desperately. "Your name is Krause, K-R-A-U-S-E, and you hail from Freiburg."

"So?" The Bavarian suddenly halted and slowly rubbed his head. "Is it so! Hm. Well, maybe. I do not recall it now."

"Trust me! Don't bother about it now. Go get this job over," urged Curialo. "You're pretending to be Trudaine, see?"

"Yes, yes!" Krause brightened up at once. "I am Trudaine, of course. I had forgotten; and I am going to a party at the Chaillot's."

"Don't be long," Curialo insisted. "Just say—"

Krause waited to hear no more. He hurried up the short driveway and leaped up the flight of steps. A startled Arab butler met him in the hall. The rooms beyond were brightly lighted and the sound of laughter reached Krause. This angered him because he thought they must be laughing at him.

A lady in a low-cut dress of blue silk appeared in a doorway and said—

"Oh!" The sound of conversation died down.

"Why, Captain Trudaine!" she exclaimed. "We heard you were suffering from a highly contagious malady—"

"Madame, I am!" roared Krause, smacking his chest with his open palm, so that all the medals clinked. "I am very sick! But it is because your husband's meat—"

"Then please go away, Captain, and come back some other time when you feel better."

Other faces were appearing in the doorway, and a Lieutenant in the uniform of the Chasseurs d'Afrique stepped forward.

"Trudaine," he began.

"Her husband is poisoning the garrison!" bellowed Krause. "Bad meat, that's all my soldiers get from him. And he grows rich and gives parties!"

"Trudaine," repeated the lieutenant, a sickly smile on his lips, "we all understand you are sick, but—"

Krause felled him with one sweep of the arm, and was out of the house before the first cry of alarm rang out. Then he went galloping down the road, with Curialo close at his heels.

The Rue de Saix was on the outskirts of the town. Krause should have turned to the left; instead he turned right and ten minutes later reached open country.

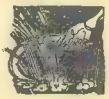
"Let's get back," panted Curialo. "You did fine, fine! But the whole town'll be at the barracks in another couple of minutes. We may have to climb the wall as it is."

"I am going to the nigger village," answered Krause. "It is out of bounds to the troops and ought to be inspected. I am an officer, by ——, and I am going to do what I like."

He was quite mad now, and he refused point-blank to become "good old Krause" again.

"I have told those —— sutlers what I think of them," he said, "that was business. Now comes pleasure. I will listen to the flute and the tomtom and watch the wriggle-wriggle dance. You come, too, you poor soldier. I will give you a good time."

But Curialo had had all the good times he wanted for one evening. By the faint light of the stars he could just make out the whitish blob that was Krause's face, and he slugged at it with every ounce of strength he had in his body. The first blow staggered Krause, the second dropped him to his knees. Before he could recover Curialo struck him again.



CAPTAIN ARISTIDE TRUDAINE was a bad patient. He awoke when the bugles sounded the *couvre-feu*, and began to fret because Withers was not at the bedside. He called and got no answer, then he rapped long and loud on the table beside the bed and only succeeded in knocking off a medicine glass.

"I could die here," he thought, "and no one would care. That —— Withers is probably asleep. I will—"

He heard a door close softly and again he called out:

"Withers! Where are you, you ——?"

Withers came in, looking pale and drawn.

"You called, sir?" he inquired meekly.

"I have been calling for the past hour! Where have you been?"

"Well, sir, seeing as 'ow you was resting comfortable, I thought as 'ow I might get some sleep myself in case I might be needed during the night."

"And you leave me here in suffering abominable! Withers, you odious rascal, you writer of defamatory letters, you—"

"You need anything now, sir?"

This meek question was more than Trudaine could bear. He threw back the covers and leaped out of bed.

Withers ducked, but not fast enough. Trudaine's fist crashed against the top of his head, and he dropped to the ground. He was fully conscious but he chose to take his punishment lying down.

And only then did Trudaine become aware of a great noise in the corridor, a stamping and tramping of feet, and the sound of many voices. Some one knocked loudly and persistently.

He stared at Withers' huddled form, and then across the living room at the shaking panels of the door.

"Captain Trudaine," a voice called out. "Open at once, if you are at home!"

As he wavered his eyes caught sight of a heap of clothes scattered on the floor—his dress uniform all soiled and torn and dust-covered, with bits of grass sticking to the buttons. And then the door gave way and a dozen people fell in.

"That's him," declared a lieutenant of Chasseurs d'Afrique with a swollen mouth.

"That is the officer," said a sergeant-major.

"That's him!" several people chorused at once.

And the regimental commander, his white beard bristling, said in an icy voice—

"Captain Trudaine, you are under close arrest!"

Then they all saw Withers, who was still lying on the floor and they all gasped together:

"He has finished by killing his orderly!"

"But what have I done?" cried Trudaine, staring from face to face, and miserably conscious of his swollen face and his bare shins sticking out of the bottom of his nightshirt.

"Disgraced yourself, disgraced the regiment!" answered the regimental commander. "For shame, Captain Trudaine! Your illness is no excuse at all. I refuse to entertain such an excuse. Your conduct has been insane. It is a scandal!"

"But I have been in bed since four o'clock this afternoon," stammered Trudaine.

"Absurd! Every one of your movements has been carefully traced already. We will take the matter up in the morning. In the mean time, give me your sword. You are not to leave these rooms without my order.

"And this poor fellow," he went on, pointing at Withers, who was being helped to his feet, "what have you been doing to him?"

"Nothing," gulped Trudaine. "I don't know—"

"Enough!" snapped the regimental commander. "Tomorrow you will face a court of inquiry. I warn you: Either you resign or I shall have you broken. Outside, *messieurs*, outside!"

And Trudaine, sensing that for some ghastly reason his career had come to an end, turned away and fell on his knees by his bed. He buried his head in his arms and tried to cry, but this hurt his sore throat too much and he was content to groan.

IT WAS late afternoon and a cool breeze had sprung up. Sitting by an open window, with a pad on his knees, Withers pulled at his one lock of hair, while he laboriously scrawled a letter.

Dear Gertie:

Hoping this finds you as it leaves me in the pink of condition and back to duty again. We done a long march this a. m. and was attacked by Arabs in the desert. But we gave them what-for and what was left of them was glad to get away. I am now very thirsty but I have no money, so you know what to do. Yes, I am back to duty because my officer gone and disgraced himself something proper. Only he did not do it all by himself. That American I have told you about, he got a crazy man called Krause to dress up and pertend to be the officer, and Krause went balmy. So this American ad to hit him for fair after it was all over and bring the uniform back into barricks over the wall.

Well nobody knows about that, and Krause he was found out of bounds with nothing on but his shirt, sitting by the river getting sunstroke. And he is now in hospital and much improved, but they will have to discharge him because he says he is Frederick the Great. Curialo says he is doing it on purpose and is very clever. It may be so. But I have only two years and two months more to go so I prefer to wait.

Do not walk out with that there carrot-top, or I will bust him one when I get back.

Yours truly,
ALBERT WITHERS. XX

After rereading this, he folded the letter and put it in his pocket. Then, whistling, he leaned out the window.

Below Curialo lounged in the shade of the doorway.

"Hi, matey!" Withers called down. "Got a sou? I got a couple. What say to a bottle of *vin rouge?*"

La Rue of the 88

A Five-Part Story
Part II
by Gordon Young

Author of "Days of '49," "Pearl-Hunger," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

BEFORE the railroad came to Perez, a little adobe village of the southwestern cattle country, old George La Rue bought a ranch sixty miles from town, which he called the Eighty-Eight. One day Monk Cunningham, the unscrupulous owner of the neighboring ranch called on the La Rues. Next day Mrs. La Rue left her husband and child and was never heard of again.

As young Larry La Rue, the son, grew up he became more and more worthless, and ran to worse and worse companions. His father stood drunkenness, lies, theft, even close association with Cunningham from his son; but when Larry ruined the innocent and beautiful daughter of old Hendryx; La Rue ordered his son from his door forever. Young Larry fled the country, and disappeared from sight.

Time passed. It was now twenty years from the time when La Rue first came to Perez. There was a railroad, and with it came numbers of people. Hotels grew up; stores, restaurants, dance halls. There were more ranchers than before. There was Jake Spencer, and the Hammarsmiths who hated each other. The Spencer outfit because things were said about old Jake's wife and young Cliff Hammarsmith while the Hammarsmith outfit returned the compliment. There were also two youngsters, Tom Walker and Blade Jones, who had a small ranch. They used Cunningham's water, and were universally hated by him and all his political friends in town. Of these politicians the chief was Jim Barley, a cripple who owned a dance hall and told the Mexican townspeople how to vote.

One day old George was reading a letter in Barley's café when a stranger stepped in.

La Rue looked up, startled, and fumbled for his gun. The stranger fired and killed La Rue.

"Anything to say, Gentlemen?" he asked. "Say it now. Boyd's my name, an' I'm ridin' out a here now. This here settles an ol' battle."

"You fought fair," they said and let him go. But they wondered who would get the ranch now. They had no idea where young La Rue was.

The letter in old George's hand was from his niece saying that she and her mother were on their way to visit him. Jim Barley was appointed administrator of the La Rue ranch.

A HORSEMAN rode into Perez and stopped at Pop Murdock's Santa Fé saloon. His face was bronzed and hard.

He looked at the reward signs on the wall, where, conspicuously, there stood a card which read:

WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE
BUCK HARRISON

"Bourbon," he said to Pop.

Said Pop to himself:

"Here's one bad hombre. Young, but he's learned." Aloud he said—

"Who are you?"

"La Rue," said the man. "Laurence La Rue."

After some talk with Pop Murdock and a little affair with Slab Saunders, town bad man and foreman of the Eighty-Eight under Barley, over a card game, La Rue informed Slab that he was no longer foreman and backed up his statement with a gun.

Later, in the I.X.L. saloon, he made friends with a girl named Nora and a young puncher by the name of Red Clark. Hendryx, turning from the piano recognized him as La Rue, and Jim Barley was called in to talk things over.

Barley claimed that old George La Rue had left a will cutting young Larry off, and offered to destroy the will and give him ten thousand dollars for a bill of sale for the ranch. La Rue refused and Barley threatened him, promising to talk the matter over with Slab Saunders and see Larry later.

VI

AS THEY walked along the street toward the Santa Fé Saloon, La Rue told of the trouble he had had with Saunders, concluding:

"—then I left, sayin' I'd be back. We're goin' there now."

"You," said young Red, "are a feller I like, an' when I like a feller I speak up, same as when I don't. I ain't nobody much, but down where I was hatched, it's customary if yore boss has any argyments for to take part. Pervidin' of course he's doin' honest."

"You are a heap particular to do right, are yuh?" La Rue inquired.

"Me? My instinks they are hones', but when I git riled I make some mistakes. Precautionary, I try to do what's right, allus, cause I'm a durned coward when I feel sneakin'. Give me some right'ous wrath, an' I don't lay down to no dang man, but if I stole a hoss blanket even, I couldn't be none quarrelsome—like this Buck Harrison we was talkin' of tonight. There's them as says he c'd walk into a sheriffs' convention, cool an' easy, an' depart shootin', cool an' easy. Nope, I c'dn't do that."

"But with half a chanct you'd go after this Harrison? After the reward?"

"Wouldn't you?" Red asked.

"Shoot 'im down?"

"No more 'n me," said Red, "you ain't the kind as shoots in the back. An' fair an' square, Buck Harrison c'd probably shoot twict to you an' me gettin' started. They say he's quick an' not compunct'ous atall."

"You 're over-modest, a little. Tonight in the I. X. L. you were set to jump an' draw against the barkeep's drop on you. I saw it comin'. An' if you was to try for a year you couldn't do anything foolisher than what yuh was goin' a-do then."

"But that ain't me, natural. Hones'. When I'm riled that way I ain't got no sense. Don't want any."

In the Sante Fé saloon there were now no customers, only the city boy who, whatever his right name, was to be known and spoken of as the Spencer kid. He was at a table, and Murdock, ponderous, with knees wide apart, sat alongside the table and smoked a cigar, talking a little—just enough to keep the boy talking without shyness of himself, his family, his sister.

"Well, yo're back, huhn?" said Murdock, glancing at La Rue, then looking with prolonged appraisal at the young Red-head, trigged out in range finery.

"Little quiet here, Dad," La Rue remarked, crossing to where Murdock sat.

"Unh-huhn, now. Some noisy f'r a time after yore departure. I tol' Slab you'd likely be back, but he was dub'ous."

Again Murdock's gaze rested upon Red, examining him critically; then—

"Meet somebody yuh knowed?"

"No, this boy here is a stranger too. We jus' bumped together an' are walkin' round together, lonesome like."

Murdock grunted as fat men do at times when comfortable, and after a pause said:

"Mister La Rue, meet this here boy—Jake Spencer's nephy. You—" this a bit watchfully—" 'member Jake I reckon?"

"Some—maybe," said La Rue.

"Unh," Murdock commented. "Seen Barley?"

"Yeah."

"He remember yuh?"

" 'Peared to."

"Said yuh looked natural, I s'pose?" Murdock inquired blandly.

"No, Dad. Don't remember his sayin'."

"Un-huhn. Have a talk, you an' him?"

"Some."

"Goin' git the Eighty-Eight, are yuh?"

The old man seemed pointedly inquisitive, but La Rue recalled his unmistakable friendliness a few hours before, and answered quietly—

"He says that legal I've got the right to 'er."

"Tell him you'd fired Saunders?"

"Yeah, I mentioned it casual."

"What'd he say, son?"

"He didn't rejoice."

"Explain why yuh ortn't have done it, did he?"

"Some."

"Say he'd get you an' Slab to patch it up, huhn?"

"Yo're a mind-reader, Dad. Them was his words."

"Well," said Murdock, knocking the ash from his cigar against the table's edge and

watching the ash fall, "I reckon Barley he knows best, an' though Slab ain't lov'ble in some aspects—you an' him met yet?"

"Not yet. No."

"Unh," Murdock grunted calmly. "Well, son, under the circumstances I can see why even agin yore feelin's you ort to let him stay on at the Eighty-Eight. Yore goin' do that, ain't yuh?"

"Think so, Dad?"

"Don't Barley want 'im there?"

"Talked quite a lot that way."

"Ain't yuh goin' do what Barley wants?"

"Dad, didn't I speak up clear an' distinct when I told that feller he was fired?"

"Yuh did. Yeah, but—"

"Well, he still is. Barley an' me talked it over quite some, an' though Barley he raised his voice up purtty high, I stand pat. He's fired—permanent."

Murdock gazed from behind an expressionless mask at La Rue for some moments, noting again the lean face, the cruel twist of mouth, the odd suggestion of good-natured recklessness, and the quiet but alertly wary manner, and Murdock nodded slightly, reaffirming a previous estimate that he was one bad *hombre*. Then the old saloon keeper arose slowly, with a mild grunt, and walked heavily round the end of the bar.

Methodically he put out three glasses; then bending low and fumbling for a time, he drew out a tall glazed stone jug, dust covered. He pulled the cork, put his nose to the mouth, drew a long breath, said, "Ah-h-h-ha." Then in a silence almost ritualistic he carefully filled the three glasses to the brim.

"This here likker," he said slowly, "it is priceless. That's why I keep it spechul an' 'bout onct in six months—Jake Spencer he don't come in much offener 'n that—I let a little trickle out. You—" to Red "—are included compliment'ry. But him there, earlier tonight he asked for Bourbon an' got hoss linament. Now son, here's lookin' at yuh straight in the eye, and again, more hearty, wishin' of yuh luck!"

VII

IN BARLEY'S saloon there was an atmosphere of quiet uneasiness, though Saunders, who had come in with his friend Pete, was anything but quiet or uneasy. The idlers sent many lingering glances watchfully toward the front door, though many said that La Rue would be mighty careful not to step in while Saunders was about; and others, without meaning any compliment toward La Rue, said that Saunders stood a mighty poor show, being now in no condition for gun play. His eyes were beginning to take on a vague, vacant look, to lose focus even when staring at some one near him.

Saunders was in an ugly mood, and no one could do anything with him. His friend Pete, too, was pretty drunk, but instead of being noisy had turned surly, and stood alone at the bar, glowering. From time to time Saunders would come up, turn him around, and they would have another drink.

Though Nora herself dealt, there were only a few white chips scattered indifferently over the layout, and she was not very interested in the game, but again and again with an expression of disgust looked toward Saunders as if about to express her opinion, loudly. Mack stood about, silently fretting. He would have liked to put something quieting into Saunders' whisky, for Saunders not only talked in a way that made everybody listen, whether or not they wished, but unsteadily walked all about the room, forcing this man or that to stand and hear, repeating the same to each.

" 'SBarley he hirsh—" Saunders plainly meant "hired"—"me, 'SBarley he c'n sfire me. No sother——man kin! Ain't thash right, Jim. Yuh bet yer—"

"Slab! Here Slab, let's go out back an' have a talk," Barley urged.

"No shir! No shir! Know whash I'm goin' do? I'm goin' make thash La Ruesh bite hisself. Yuh watsh me—jus' yuh watsh, Jim. All yuh fellers, yuh watsh me. Make 'im *bite* hisself!"

He tottered with drunken limberness of body, groped through the air for little Adams' shoulder, missed it, lurched, bumped against Adams, and grasping him said:

"Goin' have shompin' 'normous to put in thash paper, ain't yuh? Whash yuh goin' shay 'bout me? Huhn? Adams, yuh're a mangy little coyote. Yore mother was a little runt too I bet. Git way from me—"

"Slab, don't! Don't talk that way!" Adams begged, indignant and afraid.

"Shut up, you—" This with a side swipe at Adams' head that sent the little man back against the bar.

"Somebody *ought* 'o shoot you!" Nora cried from across the faro table.

"Whash 'at!" Saunders growled, facing about with a kind of trampling as if his feet got in each other's way.

"You're a fine lot of men—all you!" she called. "Let him walk all over you! Bums, the lot of you!"

"Shee 'ere!" said Saunders and staring vaguely started toward her.

Nora recklessly pushed back her chair and with the same movement opened the table drawer; her hand dipped inside, but paused as Barley, with agile limping, put himself before Saunders. Mack in a scrambling cat-like rush reached her, reached down into the drawer, catching her hand:

"None o' that, Nora! None o' that! You hear—let go that gun!"

"No —— drunk's goin' maul me—I don't care how many notches he wears for ornament!"

"Shut up!" Mack said fiercely.

She turned on him—

"Get your hands off me, I'll—"

She struck at his face with fingernails set claw-like, and he, excessively careful of his good looks, ducked back, swearing.

"Let me 'lone. That's the best thing *you* can do," she said, then with light touches felt of her hair, making sure it was in no way disarranged, brushed her dress, pushed the drawer shut, pulled up her chair, and with the composure of one quite used to victory, began to shuffle.

Barley had caught hold of Saunders and swung up his heavy cane; he did not strike but cursed:

"Blank blank yore soul! You're a fool sober an' now drunk! What's the blank blank matter with you! I've tol' you yuh're staying on as foreman, but I'm not goin' have La Rue shot up neither! You quiet down or git outta my place till yuh can carry likker like a man. You couldn't fight nothin' in the shape yuh're in. You are drunk, you blank blank fool, an'—"

"Shee 'ere—'ere," said Saunders thickly, wrapping an arm around Barley's neck with an affectionate gesture, which also helped to steady himself. "I shwouldn't take thash fr'm no man but shu, Jim. I do whash you want, allus. Know me, Jim. An' I'm goin' make—goin'-a make thash La Ruesh bite hisself—bein' foreman I-sh got 'thority to do it—I do-sh whash Jim Barley wants allus. I'm Shlab Shaunders—Yi-ee-oh!"

"Come on back an' we'll have a talk private, Slab. Come on—"

Barley started to lead him, the cripple leading a drunk; and Saunders showed now a sort of helpless willingness to go, but his body sagged and waggled. He could hardly stand.

Then a figure emerged from the darkness beyond the open doorway.

"He's come!" said Lynn excitedly, but not in a loud voice.

Men turned expectantly, looking toward La Rue, who had stopped near the door. Close behind him young Red entered and moved off to one side with stumbling clatter of high heels and long spurs, and when Red stopped near the wall there was silence.

La Rue looked quickly to the right and left, seeing who was there and what to expect. For an instant his glance paused on Smoky Pete, who stood alone, back to the bar, resting on his elbows.

It was plain that La Rue was looking for trouble, but no one there had seen any one look for it before in just that way. He held a cigaret in his hand, in his right hand, and drew on it from time to time. The expression on his lean face was unangered, but alertly eager with the cruel twist of lips like the pleased smile of a hunter that is about to flush a covey.

Lynn, the astute barkeep, muttered cryptically—

"He's bad—he's *bad!*"

Saunders, drunk as he was, sensed a warning in the expectant hush of the room.

"Whash wrong—whash—"

He turned with drunken trampling, reached gropingly for a table, and stared; but, too drunk to see, blinked vacantly into a reeling blurred haze.

La Rue frowned, puzzled, as if suspecting some new sort of trick, then started forward, straight for Saunders.

"He's drunk! Dead drunk!" Barley shouted anxiously, hobbling hurriedly in a wide circle so as to meet La Rue without being in line of fire.

La Rue came on, and there was something in his bearing, some trick of lithe ease and wariness, something about him that touched a half clairvoyant intuition in Nora and caused her to gasp. She sat up with a jerk, gasping, "My God, it can't be Buck—" then she clasped her hand silencingly over her

own mouth and looked anxiously about her; but no one had noticed.

"La Rue—don't!" Barley yelled, hobbling hurriedly.

"Back!" said La Rue with a glance that flashed past Barley and half way around the room.

At the word "La Rue," Saunders with fuddled groping reached for his gun; but his arm was heavy and he fumbled far below the holster. Half leaning on the table he swayed as if about to fall, his head waggled and his eyes, drunkenly lidded, peered anxiously but without focus.

"You ain't got no gun!" said La Rue, grinning wickedly, as he came face to face with Saunders. "It's down there on Pop Murdock's bar—yuh plumb forgot to git it."

"Huh-anh?" Saunders grunted, doubtful, anxious, twisting his head sidewise, trying to remember.

La Rue with head also a little sidewise watched him, and watched elsewhere too. This Saunders was too drunk to shoot or to be shot, but—as he was taking the cigaret from his mouth, La Rue swung one foot backward, half turning; his hand dropped, the cigaret fell away, and before it touched the floor, his gun, hip-high and muzzle-on, blazed. It was almost as if there had been eyes in the back of his head, and the surly Pete pitched forward, gun in hand, and fell face down, sprawled awkwardly like a drunken sleeper.

A gleam of cruel humor flickered in La Rue's eyes, and the next instant he had turned watchfully on Saunders whose groping hand had found his gun's butt.

"Don't do it!" said La Rue, half jeeringly and jammed the still smoking muzzle against Saunders' stomach so hard that the breath was nearly knocked out of him and he grunted hoarsely.

"Here—here—let me get that offen him!" Barley shouted, and hobbling anxiously got to Saunders' side, caught his arm, pulled away his hand, took the gun from the holster, and stepped back, breathing hard. Panting between words he said—

"He's a drunk man—don't La Rue!—it 'd be murder!"

"Mister Barley, do you allow that this feller is fit for to be foreman o' the Eighty-Eight. Huhn?"

"No—he's quit! No—it 's all right! No—I told him tonight it was yore ranch! I'm goin' to give him his time as soon as he sobers—here, some of you fellers, take Slab into a back room—git him to bed—outta the way f'r God's sake!"

Lynn came from around the bar, and he and two or three others led off the soddenly drunk Saunders.

La Rue watched, looked about the room at the men who eyed him, then put away his gun and without a word he and Red left the saloon.

CHAPTER IV

BUCK HARRISON

THE next morning it was quiet in the town of Perez, and though there was much talk of La Rue, he was not to be found loafing about where he could be talked to or stared at.

Some, for there are always some to give a man the worst of it, said that he kept out of sight lest Pete had friends, or Saunders sober would show up differently than Saunders drunk. But others, particularly those who had been in the I. X. L. the night before, said no matter what name La Rue had got for himself in his youth, he now needed to be afraid of no man: he could draw against the best, and apparently could see out of the back of his head.

Red and La Rue that morning again came into the dining room late, and again it was empty except for a man and a woman. The woman they recognized as the one who had been there the night before, silently crying in the shadows; but the man was a sun-dried, wind-beaten small old fellow with deep-set eyes and a goatee. He looked tough as rawhide.

This was Jake Spencer; and though he kept only good boys on his ranch they all knew that except for straddling twisters, as bronco busting was at times called, he was as good as the best of them; and anyhow bronco breaking was not work for old bones, they being brittle and likely to crack. Jake Spencer was upward of sixty.

He was well spoken of by his riders.

"Ol' Jake he won't send a man where he won't go hisself. He ain't never had no edycation much, but bein' square an' never tryin' to cheat nobody he ain't needed 'er. He's liable to say right out what he thinks to ary man alive, but no, he ain't what you call quarrelsome, though at times he's powerful sudden. An' folks as know him *real* well is allus his friend."

Minnie, the waitress who would have fed a horse-thief at midnight, greeted La Rue and Red as old patrons:

"You boys jus' did horn in time f'r cakes an' coffee. Laws' sakes, but you don't 'pear to be hungry till other folks has nearly all et."

She gave a tight hard wink, jerked her head significantly toward the man and woman, then nodded, and bending low in a pretense of arranging the cutlery by La Rue's plate, whispered:

"Cliff Hammarsmith he ain't got no appytite this mornin'! He's an orful coward. That there is Jake Spencer."

Before cakes and coffee, together with ham an' eggs and fried 'taters came, Jake Spencer, who had been staring pointedly at La Rue, arose and came toward him.

La Rue saw fear come into the woman's staring eyes, and her gaze seemed anxious, almost imploring.

"Yuh 're La Rue, ain't ye?" said Spencer. He spoke jerkily, sharply. His eyes were gray and keen.

"Yes," said La Rue, rising. "An' o' course, I'd remember you any place. You 're Jake Spencer."

He put out his hand to Spencer; but the old fellow replied—

"Huh, if yuh 'member me that well yuh ought know better an' stick out yore hand to me!"

Young Red shifted quickly in his chair, glancing anxiously; but La Rue was smiling, and Spencer, not even watching to see whether or not he smiled, was pulling out a chair and sitting down; then he examined La Rue critically.

"I started late an' druve through the night in a buckboard so as to git here an' start back in time to reach the ranch time to do some work yit today. My wife she's been on a trip back to her folks in Kansas—brought her brother home. I reckon he's goin' be my heir, that kid. I've knowed him since he was a little shaver, an' promised to make him a rancher when he was well branded with some edycation. So yuh see, I have got a little kindly feelin' toward yuh. Yeah. I stopped in a'ready this mornin' to see Murdock. Me an' him was boys together forty year ago, down on the border, when men they was men. Had quite a talk, me an' him. Murdock he speaks highly o' ye. Had *quite* a talk, me an' him. I can't say as how I'd a-knowed *you* any place. You've changed, though yuh are skinny an' have got black hair—"

La Rue with an odd smile rubbed his hand gingerly over his black hair.

"—but the La Rue I knowed wouldn't a poked his gun up agin Slab Saunders, no matter how many kids he was a-robbin'. He'd a-jined in. Murdock he speaks a mighty good word f'r yuh, an' he speaks seldom. Killin' that feller Pete las' night shows yuh 're capable o' doin' some good in the world. Me an' ol' George La Rue we wasn't friends, but we wasn't enemies, the which was some unusual mongst sech as knowed him. I allus felt sorry f'r him 'cause he broke his heart over a —— worthless whelp of a coyote. Now I promised Murdock to look yuh over an' see—" Spencer paused and glanced abruptly at Red; then, "Friend o' yourn *long?*"

"Since yesterday."

"Then he don't know no more about yuh than other folks?"

"No. He's a stranger to me when I come to town."

"All right, young feller. Now listen clost. I ain't shore I'm doin' right in keepin' still this away, but me an' Murdock had a long talk, an' on account o' the way he spoke up, an' some other things as seem to bear out his 'pinion, sech as Pete an' Saunders an' that half breed rattlesnake, Barley, I'm goin' to keep my mouth shet. Now there's a couple o' women I hear out to the ranch. I ain't never seen 'em yit, but I know Jim Barley well enough to know he'll rob 'em somehow. He'd take the weddin' ring outta his mother's coffin, the which opinion ain't none private with me. I've tol' it to him hisself. Now you, for all o' me, you kin draw cards in this here game you 've started. But you an' me is goin' have an understandin' soon. I'll be ridin' over to see yuh. Murdock he was allus a good jedge o' men, but I ain't none too shore. No, I ain't."

And having said that, Spencer got up, shoved the chair back under the table, turned on his heel and walked to where his young wife sat gazing moodily into space. He spoke to her and she arose and followed him from the room.

"Is he loco or what?" asked Red in a subdued tone. "Talkin' that way to you. I must say, speakin' honest, I was some nervous. Not a-meanin' to be over personal, but has he got somethin' on yuh?"

"Yes," said La Rue, "he has. He shore has!"

"He 'peared to refer some pointedly to yore misguided youth."

"When they was passin' around curiosity, Red, you sort a-helped yoreself freely, didn't yuh?"

"Now see here," said Red, "I'm a heap respectful toward yuh. 'Sides other things I've got so much admiration f'r yore gun-play that I'd go tearin' outta town on foot, maybe, rather 'an have you git agitated by my presence. I'd hate to be able to draw the like yuh can because me, bein' a weak, vain mortal cuss, I'd go 'round gittin' anger quick jus' to show off. So I'm admirin' of yore self-control in bein' mild while that little ol' feller was insultin'. Off hand an' casual like, I'd say it 'ud take more 'n a little feller with some goat whiskers to stampede you."

"I've run at times," said La Rue.

"So 've I. Lots o' times. When I've got any guilty feelin's I run."

"I wonder, Red, just how honest you are?"

"Well, me, I ain't nobody much, but my ol' Dad he was sher'ff o' Tolluco County f'r sixteen year. He died in bed natural, the which I allow is some testymony as to the nimbleness o' his trigger finger, yet he was a heap reluctant about hurtin' anybody, needless. Dyin', he says to me, 'Son, life it's some pleasant an' joyful to have, but don't ever try to live longer than yuh can look ary man on earth straight in the eye without feelin' some shame up around yore hair roots.'

"Now, Mister La Rue, I've exper'mented some doin' things I ortn't, an' I've come to the conclusion that my Dad he was shore right. Natural, I ain't no better 'an anybody else, but unfortunate I git plumb unhappy doin' what I ort a-be 'shamed to do. My worst failin' is havin' this here aw-burn hair. It 'pears to make me get over-het easy. But knowin' there is some men the which kin draw same as I see you do is goin' a-be some soothin' to me from now on. Yeah. Is there anyhow a feller what ain't crippled none in his arms kin learn that there draw?"

"I reckon."

"I'd admire for to have some instructions."

"Practise about four hour a day for ten year."

"Yuh've done that!"

"Jus' about."

"An'," asked Red incredulously, "did yore left hand git some instructions too?"

"Does yore left leg know how to walk?"

"You mean you can throw two guns like that?"

"One no better than the other. But packin' two guns makes you look quarrelsome. I come here peaceful."

"Yuh know," said Red, with an odd uncontrollable frankness, "if it wasn't for my instink I wouldn't like you. Usual there 's something wrong with a feller the which not bein' no sher'ff can handle guns that way. Besides, Mister La Rue, times you've got a way of smilin'-like that makes me uncertain whether I ort a-run or grin back. But my instink says you are branded O. K. right in the middle o' the back bone. So I feel all right about it."

II

THAT morning Barley, in a very affable mood, took La Rue to the Court House, which was the upper story of the bank building; and La Rue was introduced to various persons. He was required to swear an oath or two with upraised hand and sign some papers.

"Now Larry," Barley said, with a glow of friendliness all over his face, "we do things informal here. I'll get right after this. An' if ever'thing goes all right I'll see as how yore cousin don't get a look-in. But o' course, you 've got to give me a little somethin'. I'll bring a paper 'round for you to sign. Remember, that there will can be found anytime—then you get nothin'. Understand?"

La Rue nodded, apparently without much interest; then asked—

"Where's Saunders?"

"Over to my place, in back. Drinkin' lemon sodas an' feelin' bad. He don't remember nothin' of that little epysode las' night. An' it wasn't none too pleasant tryin' to convince 'im. I allow that this afternoon Slab he'll light out an' look for work some'eres. Yeah. You shore did tie a knot in his tail."

When Barley hobbled back to the I. X. L., Red was sitting at a table with Nora, spending on her his advance wage.

In a back room Saunders sat on the edge of a bed with one hand pressed against his

head, and in the other he held a bottle of soda water. Empty soda bottles were on the floor. His head hurt, his pride hurt, and his thirst was the thirst of hot ashes. His was a big bony frame, but now, sagging and huddled, he appeared to have shrunk.

Mack and, the relief bartender being on duty, Lynn were with him. They pretended to be sympathetically keeping him company, but were in fact watching to see that he did not slip out the back way and go gunning for La Rue, though they were thinking less of La Rue's safety than of Saunders'.

Lynn was rolling cigarets and throwing them away half smoked; Mack scraped his fingernails delicately, occasionally polishing them along the sleeve of his coat.

Barley came in and said—

"Now you boys better let me an' Slab have a talk, private."

They went out.

"How yuh feel, Slab?"

Saunders lifted his head, gave Barley a long look with both eyes now a-squint, then dropped his head and said nothing.

"Don't be down-hearted none, Slab. Yuh jus' listen. There's still plenty o' work f'r you to do on the range. —— she shore goin' pop, *pronto*. The Hammarsmith boys, so Cliff hisself has been tellin' me, are goin' jump ol' Spencer's water—water an' feed bein' so scarce they got to or go broke. I reckon Cliff means to pack off the Missus too."

Saunders, with no interest, grunted.

"You go back out to Cunnin'ham's an' you can make all the trouble f'r the Eighty-Eight you want. Discourage this La Rue from any notions that he wants to be a rancher. That ought to give yuh some satisfaction."

Saunders drank to the last drop from the soda bottle, then tossed it carelessly at the wall.

He used many oaths in saying that the—

"—only satisfaction I'll ever git outta that feller is when I walk over an' look down to see jus' where the bullet went. I'm goin' make him wish harder 'an them women do that they was out o' this country, an' I've got them cryin' an' prayin' f'r a way out! I bet right now they'd sell out all rights an' claims f'r five thousand, even if they had the will in their own hands. I searched that ranch high an' low for that —— will—"

"Maybe you didn't look thorough 'nough," Barley suggested. "But it's shapin' up so either way, we get the ranch. You go back out to Cunnin'ham an' tell him how the land lays, an' however much you can worry this La Rue who 'pears to think he's goin' turn rancher, you worry him. Understan'?"

Out in the barroom Nora was saying to young Red:

"Look here, kid, I believe you're lying to me. You 've known La Rue a whole lot longer than just since yesterday, now haven't you?"

"Honest, no, ma'am. An' you talk mighty queer like yuh thought—I don't know what yuh think—like he was somebody else too besides bein' who he is. What you think 's the matter with him?"

"Nothing 's the matter with him. I think he's all right. That's just it. Sometimes I'm half sure and again I ain't sure at all, that some place onct I've seen him."

"Where?"

"Onct I met somebody on the train—some how Mr. La Rue puts me in mind o' that fellow."

"Why don't you ask him?"

"Yes, I might do that," she said evasively, "but, I'll tell you, kid, one of these days, sometime, you just ask him if he wasn't on the train one night up in Kansas when Buck Harrison held it up an' see—"

"He wasn't or he'd a-spoke up yesterday when yuh was talkin' about it."

"No, no he wouldn't 've. You see—" she bent forward, explaining— "being a man he wouldn't feel proud to 'fess up. But did you notice how close he looked at me while I was tellin' the story? I've thought it over afterward, and I'm sure he is the man I think. But he wouldn't want to speak about it, because, kid—would *you* talk about it, or 'fess up willing, if you 'd stood by with a lot of other fellows an' let two men—just two men—go through a car robbin' women? Of course you wouldn't! Not though there was others of the gang outside, shootin' and yellin'. Of course you wouldn't!"

"He wasn't there. No—" Red waggled his head emphatically. "Yuh've mistook him. Usual he totes two guns, an'—no, he wasn't there or Buck Harrison he'd a-been loaded into the baggage car an' took on to where there was a graveyard."

"Well, some day you ask him. Will you? Soon?"

"Shore," said Red out of courtesy, but

feeling that the request, having no real basis to justify it, was unimportant.

A little withered dust-covered Mexican, wearing a huge sombrero, came into the saloon. He grinned with shy friendliness, sweeping off his hat to Nora, but she frowned aloofly. Socially, she did not recognize Mexicans unless they were public officials.

"Señor Barley he is not here, señorita?"

"There's the barkeep. Ask him."

"Ah—" and mildly pleasant—"an' my frien' Señor La Rue, he is not here?"

Nora's manner changed with fickle alacrity.

"Say, Juan, how long have you known him?"

"Oh oh, since he was so high—" Juan stooped and held his palm about two feet from the floor— "an' the ol' Señor George gave him to me to teach him to ride. I hear he is in Perez."

Juan grinned, showing that he had also heard of what La Rue had done since arriving.

"He's here all right. He sure was here in this bar room last night. Where is he now, kid? This is a friend of his too, Juan."

"So?" and Juan Hurtados examined the red-headed boy carefully. "You señor, have known him a long time?"

"Yeah. Since yesterday."

"Ah."

"He 's over to the hotel, 'r was," said Red.

"What's he been doin', Juan," Nora inquired, "all these years he's been away? Folks think he's changed some."

Juan shrugged his shoulders, answering mildly:

"He go here, he go there, work. He was a boy then, a man now. Yes."

"Old Hendryx saw him," said Nora, and Juan listened watchfully. "He knowed him. An' Jake Spencer—"

"Ah?"

"Yes, Juan, an' both of them expressed theirselves free, an' he took it like—oh he took it calm."

"So-oo-o?"

"You bet he did! But he's got ever'body else steppin' sideways an' gentle."

Juan clucked doubtfully, then with a parting bow to Nora and Red, turned and hurried from the saloon.

"It was Hurtados there," Nora explained, "that was the only one as knew where Larry could be found after ol' George La Rue died—"

III

JUAN HURTADOS quietly looked about the hotel from front porch to the wash stand back of the building, then inquired of the proprietor for La Rue.

"Up to his room I think. Jus' come in a while ago. Second door right, top stairs."

Juan went up the stairs, knocked lightly, calling:

"Juan Hurtados, señor. It is Juan."

"Waltz right in, Juan," a voice answered.

Juan opened the door slowly, not as if cautious about entering, but as if careful not to open the door with startling suddenness; and when he had looked through and shown that it was really himself, Juan Hurtados, he stepped inside with a kind of catlike quickness, grinning broadly.

La Rue, sitting on the bed where he had been lying, eyed Juan, grinned back at him, and nodded.

"Shut that door an' come over here. Yuh 've got me into a nice mess o' pickles."

Juan came, grinning, and sat down, bending forward, ready to listen.

"She's all off, Juan. She was good idee, but she's got lots that 's wrong with 'er."

"So-oo-o, señor?"

"Yeah. An' you never tol 'me about that I. X. L. girl—Nora they call 'er. She looked me over hard."

The little old Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

"She does not know you, señor. She saw nothin' but a handkerchief on a man. An' today, señor, I hear of you firs' thing. Smoky Pete—ah, it is good!"

"You ain't heard the half! You shore started somethin' when you led the Buck Harrison gang up into the San Arnaz country, claimin' you knew ever' foot of the ground."

"That I do, señor. I was *vaquero* for Señor George when the leetle boy could not yet ride."

"Yeah, so you told Dad when he come rampin' back after meetin' an' killin' old La Rue—"

"It is your ranch, Señor Buck!"

"Yeah, I reckon, by rights—some of it, anyhow, bein' as La Rue was onct Dad's pardner, an' stole ever'thing. But it was all yore doin's—tellin' him that night if I blacked my hair I'd look like that young

Larry. What yuh mean, insultin' of me that away?"

Juan shrugged his shoulders, smiling.

"You're an awful liar, Juan. You said La Rue 'd been gone so long—nobody knowed where—that nobody 'd know the diff'rence. Ol' Murdock, who'd never seen La Rue, guessed it first off. An' that bunch o' rawhide with chin whiskers named Spencer, he 's shore got me puzzled deep. Him an' Murdock has talked it over—I reckon they figger if I can get away with bein' young La Rue, they 'll get to stick their noses in the feed bag. But they 're goin 'be mighty hungry, Juan. I ain't goin' get away with it, nor try."

"What, señor!"

"No. But funny, Juan, that ol' Hendryx he 'peared to think he knowed me; but he can't see good. An' Barley he pertended he knowed me. It 's shore been funny. But we 're out. There 's a will. Barley's got it."

"A will, señor! No!"

"Barley's holdin' it out to double-cross the woman. By the will, ever'thing goes to her. He's offered to hold it out if I'll sell out to him. But I won't. I don't like him that well. I don't like him at all.

"I thought all I had to do was like you an' Dad figgered: Come in here, say, I'm La Rue, have you 'dentify me, then ride out to the ranch an' start bossin'. But like usual, I had some trouble, *pronto*, an' now I'm layin' here, keepin' out o' sight, 'cause I don't want ever 'body lookin' me over. I might have to leave through smoke. Where 'd you leave the boys?"

"The men, señor, an' your father, they had words and I took the señor, your father, over to the hills above the ranch to wait. Bob Elkins, he leads the others up into Colorado to rob the train an'—"

"So the old gang's broke up at last, huhn? Well, I wish 'em luck, but I think Dad's wise in ridin' wide o' them Santa Fé trains—perticular, the ones it's so easy to find out are a-carryin' of so much gold. Try to get you to go with 'em, Juan?"

"Si, señor, but—" Juan shrugged his shoulders again "—when the ol' señor, your father, would not go, I would not go. He is a gray wolf, señor, an' can smell—"

"The nigger in the woodpile," said Buck. "Yo're right. An' my smeller is workin' pretty strong right now. I'm goin' clear outta o' here. But know what I'm goin a-do? I'm goin' get Barley up here an' tell 'im that me, bein' honest, I won't have no pleasure a-tall in cheatin' my pore little cousin outta her ranch, the which is hers by right o' the will. I met a red-headed feller here that talks that away about happiness—as if he really meant it. I'll borrow some o' his remarks for to use on Barley."

"It is as you say, Señor Buck."

IV

THAT afternoon Juan went to Barley and said that La Rue was up in his room at the hotel, not feeling so very well, and would Señor Barley go to see him.

Barley wanted to know what was the matter, but Juan shrugged his shoulders and gave no more of an answer than that.

"Lynn," said Barley in speaking of it to his bartender, "that fellow La Rue is layin' low 'cause he don't know yet that Slab has rode outta town! He inquired perticular about Slab this mornin'. I've seen 'em before, jus' like him. They get worked up an' make a gun play, get their man mebbe, then their courage it peters out an' they crawl off some'eres an' shiver, scairt o' their shadder."

"Jim, you've been plumb unfortunate in yore acquaintances if yuh can't figger him no better 'an that. La Rue he almost laughed when he shot Pete, jus' like he'd played a joke in lettin' pore Pete draw on his back. Jim, I'm tellin' yuh that feller *likes* seein' 'em drop. Saunders an' me is half way friends, but Saunders he'd better ride wide an' slow 'round that feller. He's plumb bad!"

"——," said Barley. "Look how Hendryx laid into him, an' he took it! Look how Minnie says ol' Jake Spencer wouldn't shake hands an' talked mighty sharp-like. He took it. You 're no jedge o' men, Lynn."

"Mebbe not," Lynn agreed complacently.

"Well," said Barley, feeling absently inside his coat pocket, "I'm goin' over an' see what's the matter with him an'—"

"Say, listen Jim. Yuh ain't gone crazy enough to have a *gun* stuck inside that pocket, have yuh?"

Barley, who never went armed, bared his broad teeth in a knowing grin and patted his pocket.

"Give me a little refreshment out o' that Three X bottle, Lynn. I got a-right to start celebratin' a-ready."

Barley took two drinks, settled his broad black hat at a slant on his bald head, and with as much of a swagger as a heavy-set cripple could put into a walk, started for the hotel. Such friends as he met on the street, Barley greeted with a cordial flourish of cane that caused them who knew him best to wonder what deal he had now pulled off.

He climbed the stairs and knocked bruskly with his cane.

"Who is it?"

"Me, Barley."

"The door's not locked."

Thus invited, Barley opened the door and entered. His face was almost genial. The man he thought was young La Rue sat on the bed looking rather wobegone.

"What's the matter, boy? Don't feel right? Stomick botherin' yuh? Come on over to my place. I've got some first rate bitters?"

Buck Harrison, outlaw, eyed him quizzically, half amused; then with a saddened expression shook his head.

"No Mr. Barley, it's worse. I been broodin'. I feel powerful bad. Y' see, Mr. Barley, it wouldn't be right f'r me to get that ranch an' cheat them women—"

"Wha-a-at!" said Barley. *"What!"* he repeated, then sat down heavily on the nearest chair and stared apprehensively. "You've et somethin'?"

"No, I ain't been in no shape to eat—much. I had some dinner, but it didn't give me no pleasure. Y' see, Mr. Barley, I can't feel good when I'm doin' wrong, an' it would be *stealin'* for me to get that ranch."

Barley cleared his throat and examined Buck with almost startled puzzlement:

"I never heard such talk! What's—what's got into you?"

"Maybe *you* never done nothin' you knowed was wrong, Mr. Barley, so you can't understand how I feel."

"You—say, have you—" Barley sniffed and bending forward peered about the room, looking over the floor for bottles—"have you been drinkin'?"

"No, but I've been prayin' a little."

"You've what! You've been—you *don't* look jus' right, boy."

"I've meditated long an' deep. If there wasn't no will, I'd get the ranch. Bein' as there is, it b'longs to them women. I can't rob nobody. I'm goin' quit."

Barley leaned forward heavily on his cane: he opened his mouth to speak, and remained thoughtfully silent, thinking hard and staring hard at Buck, who shook his head from time to time with a forlorn air.

"I allus try to do what's right," said Buck, "an' if I don't succeed, I'm plumb unhappy. I've got to look folks straight in the eye or I feel some shame up around my hair roots."

Barley regarded him with puzzlement and indignation.

"You mean you're goin' back out?"

"I can't stand feelin' guilty."

"You're scairt o' Slab!" Barley said what popped into his thought without weighing the words, and they startled him a little as he heard them jump from his own mouth.

"Yeah, I reckon."

"Listen, boy," said Barley sympathetically, and his hand fumbled at his inside coat pocket, "I don't b'lieve that a-tall. It was wrong o' me to speak so. You are a fine boy. You ain't scairt o' anybody. I knowed you was a fine boy first off. You saw how I took to yuh, an' I've spoke up for yuh. It was wrong of us to plan to rob them pore women. I see it now, an'—" Barley drew an indelible pencil from his pocket and moistened it on his tongue, leaving a blue streak on tongue and lower lip—"if you 'll jus' sign this here paper—" he pulled the paper into view—"I can go ahead an' straighten things out. This here is jus' formal matter for the jedge."

Barley handed the pencil to Buck, then folded the paper, exposing little more than the place where the signature was to be, and he placed it on Buck's knee. With both hands Barley held the paper firmly as if to make it more smooth and firm while Buck signed.

"What's this here?" Buck asked, with pencil poised.

"Some legal matter—just to make ever' thing straight an' square—" and then, as a hurried after-thought—"sayin' you give up all claim to the ranch. Me, bein' administrator, I've got to have it signed."

"Huhn? How'd you come to have it all ready? Let me see this here paper an'—"

Barley would have removed the paper, but Buck's hand closed on it, and the look in Buck's eyes, caused Barley to take away his hands.

Buck shook open the paper. It was an undated bill of sale to "—my full interest and holdings in the property known as the La Rue ranch—"

"Well you onery hornswogglin' ol' hypercrite, you," said Buck, surprizingly good-natured of tone, more in admiration than anger. "I'd shore like to see you in a hoss trade!"

"Sign it, Larry," urged Barley, encouraged by the lack of anger. "Legal matters they are queer that away. Of course after the will—"

"Yeah. After the will is showed this wouldn't be worth nothin'. Come to think of it, you ain't showed *me* that will yet. Let 's have a look—"

"Ain't showed—look here, you don't think I pack it around with me, do yuh?"

"Where is it?" asked Buck.

"Put away, careful."

"Where?"

"Where nobody 'll find it, ever!"

"Listen, you. I play some poker now an' then with friends, an' if it 's a good-sized pot an' a man he says he's got threes to my two pair, I say 'Le's see 'em—' even to good friends. Where is it?"

"Put away safe, where it 's goin' to stay. You don't think—" this with a manner meant to be coldly crushing—"I ain't got it?"

"Y' know, now that you mention it twict—" Buck slowly tore the bill of sale in two"—I begin to smell suspicions. You've gone to the pains to identify me, legal, an' start the ball a-rollin', for which I got gratytude. But not so much as to give you my ranch jus' on your say-so that you 've got an ace in the hole. If you 've got that will, trot 'er out, because, Barley, I'm standin' pat!"

"I'll—I'll—you 'll never get a cent!"

"Won't, huhn? I'm Larry La Rue, ain't I?"

"Yes, you are, but—"

"An' you —— near bluffed me clear out! Tryin' to rob an orphan o' his inheritance. My but you are a wicked man. An' such a kind face as you 've got. It shore pays to be hones', Barley. Y' see if I hadn't felt ashamed an' guilty I'd never suspected you —an' you haven't got any more of a last will an' testymony of ol' George La Rue than you 've got white spots on yore soul! That's why you 're tryin' to scare off them women too, so if a will did show up, they 'd be willin' to sell quick! There ain't no will, an' I'm the heir—an' I been identified, legal. It shore pays to be hones'!"

Barley, red of face, angered, beaten, furious, sat and listened to the jeering until at last with sudden impulse he sprang up, and hobbling and thumping his cane, he made for the door. He flung it open and did not pause to close it, but from the head of the stairs, turning, he called back:

"I'll get even with you! I'll get even—"

Then with stumble and jerk and loud thump-thump-thump he hurried down the stairs.

CHAPTER V

THE RANCH

THE three horsemen, Buck Harrison, young Red Clark, and Juan Hurtados, came to the top of a rocky bare hill and paused as Juan swept his arm in a far-reaching gesture that took in a great expanse of brown, dry, treeless range, and beyond this the gray brush-covered uplands. Behind lay the mountains.

"It is your *rancho*, señor."

Nearly every cow outfit in the San Arnaz Basin was backed up almost against the mountains, and some used rather remote mountain valleys for range. Near the base of the mountains were springs, and in some places streams, that lasted through the longest hottest summer.

In the San Arnaz a range was valued almost wholly by its water; land was cheap and mostly free; but out in this cheap free land there might be once in fifty miles, rarely twice, a mudhole that kept a meager life all summer, and these holes were precious as gold mines. There strong houses and corrals were built, and cowboys chased off parched cattle that came wearing the brand of distant owners.

The cattle might bawl in protest and hover for hours, even days, begging for water.

A fight for range meant always a fight for water, usually for some far off mudhole where troughs had been put in and fenced in, and horsemen stood guard. Thousands upon thousands of dollars had been wasted by cattlemen in sinking wells, but it seemed that the only place water could be found was where it showed itself.

Juan pointed: To the south lay Spencer's Arrowhead, beyond him the Hammersmith brothers; to the north, Cunningham.

Cattle were scattered about the hills; and many of the cattle with a swaying trot lumbered on in the same direction as the

men were riding. The cattle were going toward the home ranch water.

The men rode on through the heat of the day and shortly after noon they approached the home ranch.

The ranch house was a wide solid one-story abode, built for men, hard-working men, who needed no more furniture than bunks, benches and a table.

The house had, of course, been put there because of water. With timber and green hides, old George La Rue had built corrals, and with timber and adobe he had built sheds for chuck wagons, store rooms, blacksmith shop, shelter for horses from sun and rain. The adobe house had been built according to his idea of what a ranch house should be like.

There was a large bunk room and a large dining room which was also the kitchen; and between the two rooms was a wide passage, roofed, but open on two sides. "Front porch," some called it, and others, "the parlor". The ranch house was more like a cavalry barracks than a home. Throughout the house the bare earth served as a floor.

La Rue had built for his own use a small and nearly bare room that seemed to have been stuck on the side of the bunk room as a sort of afterthought; and so it was, for when his wife left him he deserted the smaller house a quarter of a mile away. It had stood all those years, rotting from disuse, rarely visited.

There was no one in sight as the men rode up, no sign of human life; it was quite as if the ranch was deserted. Behind them cattle were bunched, nosing and pushing into the long water trough, filled, and overflowing, by a small flume of grooved logs that brought water from a spring.

At the horse corral was another trough, half in, half out of the corral, so that the same trough served to water horses within and without.

Cattle had also gathered there.

"Looks like the prodergal son he was goin' to have to rope his own fat calf," said Red Clark. "Ain't even a hoss in sight, nowhere."

They rode up to the trough, quirting the rumps of such cattle as did not run.

Buck dismounted, dropping the reins

"I'll poke about up there to the house," said Buck, "an' if there ain't nobody here, we'll find the grub box anyhow."

II

AS BUCK approached the "front porch" he heard a voice, a negro's voice, and it seemed to be an angry negro's voice.

Quietly he stepped to the door and looked through. At the other end of the room, past the tables, where the stove was and shelves and pans lined the wall, he saw the negro cook talking to a woman. Buck could not see her face, but he saw her step back and back in a kind of fascinated fright from the negro who held a butcher knife, glared and talked loudly:

"—you-all come in here botherin' me, yuh won't never git nothin' t'eat. If you-all wants t'eat yuh come right 'long in with the men when I sings grub-o! This here ain't no hotel! I ain't goin' cook no spechul f'r boarders. This here 's a cow ranch. I got my orders. Yuh ain't got no rights on this ranch no how. You been pesterin' 'round here 'nough. Now yuh git outta my kitchen an' yuh stay—"

Buck grinned as he drew his gun; he sighted with a moment's care, then shot. The bullet went true and cut the earth from under the cook's foot, and the cook dropped his knife and went into the air with a leap that was as if he had been lifted by an explosion, and as he went he yelled.

The woman screamed, staggering back against the wall as she turned. She was a tall woman, middle-aged.

Buck slipped his gun into its holster and came in unhurriedly, taking off his hat. He looked pleased and cordial, but the woman eyed him and gasped as if she had been running.

"Lady, if I scairt you, I'm sorry because I reckon you an' me are maybe some relation. I'm Larry La Rue—"

At that the woman gave a start, and, as if about to collapse, stared fearfully.

"—an' I jus' wanted to serve notice on the cook here that we would all have dinner, *pronto*—"

The cook was trembling; he blurted hurriedly:

"Boss, I'se done! I ain't the cook no more. I done quit long time ago. I—" he lifted his foot, hopped a step or two, propped himself against the stove and anxiously examined the bottom of his shoe.

"Not much," said Buck. "Cooks they are valu'ble an'—"

There was the sound of galloping horses, and Buck whirled, on guard; but it was only Juan and Red, who, alarmed by the shot, had galloped up to the house, and from horseback now peered through the door.

"Go on back an' wash up f'r dinner," Buck told them.

After pausing a moment to make sure that all was well, and that Buck had no need of them, they turned and rode back to the water trough.

"Cook," said Buck, "we 'd be right obliged if you 'd rustle up some grub. Lady, ain't you had no dinner yet neither?"

Weakly, in fright, she asked—

"You are—are Laurence La Rue?"

"Yes 'am. That's me all over."

The cook put his foot down gingerly.

"Boss, I want a-quit! I been tryin' for to quit—"

"We—we are nearly *starving!*" said the woman. "They won't let us eat!"

"Won't let yuh eat?" asked Buck.

"No. We have to eat with the men, and they—oh it has been miserable!"

Buck eyed the cook and the cook spoke up quickly, anxiously:

"Them they was orders—hones'—the boss's orders—I'd a fed the ladies full as ticks, but—"

"What boss?" asked Buck.

"Saunders. He's the boss—he said if I give 'em a bit t' eat spechul he'd cut my years off an' fry 'em. I don't like my job here nohow. I been tryin' to quit an' nobody won't let me!"

"An', ma'am, you mean the boys—not countin' that crooked-eyed Saunders—have been insultin' to ladies?"

"You saw him, you heard him—" she pointed toward the cook—"the others are worse. They shoot and yell—it has been terrible! We can't even leave. I never believed men could be such—such *cowards*."

"Lady, such worries as them are done, permanent. Saunders he won't be here no more. We had a talk in town, me an' him, an' I've sort o' took his place. But I can't understan' where Saunders found a bunch o' skunks so much like hisself as to treat ladies insultin'. Cook, are yuh shore it's been intentional with 'em?"

The cook answered earnestly:

"Boss, I been the mos' politest man on this here ranch! Ain't I, missus?"

Her answer was an indignant look and silence.

"What's yore name?" Buck asked the cook.

"My name it is Henery Washin—"

"Henry, I'd admire to see you work some. You look to me like a mighty good cook. An' ma'am, Henry here will have a dinner, special, ready *pronto*. Won't you, Henry?"

"Yes suh!" said the cook, and with clattering haste began taking the lids from his stove and putting in kindling.

"You—you are Laurence?" the woman asked weakly.

"Yes 'am."

"I must go—I must go find—"

She turned hastily and almost ran from the room.

Buck looked after her, puzzled, then stepped to a window, watching her after she had left the house, and saw her look about frantically, searching, then she passed from sight around the house.

"Henry," said Buck, kicking a stool from under a table and putting his foot on it, "what's been goin' on here?"

The cook had got potatoes and was peeling rapidly. He talked earnestly, eagerly:

"Boss, I'se the only ol' Eighty-Eight man lef' here at the home ranch. Yes suh! Ol' Mr. George he had sixteen men right here, workin' steady, year 'round, an' come summer there was more. Ain't more'n five or six now. Saunders he fired all the ol' men 'cept one an' that's me. An' me I wanted to quit bad. Boss, don't yuh evah tell 'im as I tol' yuh but, Boss, he took on orful after them women they come, an' I heard him say they 'd soon light out f'r home 'r he'd change his name. The ol' missus she's been wantin' to cut an' run, but the young missus she won't budge. Boss, yuh look an' ac' jus' like ol' Mr. George hisself, an' I'se glad to see yuh!"

"Saunders got rid of the old men an' brought in a parcel o' galoots as wear the same brand he does?"

"Yuh 're sho' right, boss. He tol' the young missus he was workin' for the 'ministrater, an' he was goin' run this here ranch like he wanted till the 'state it was settled. He tol' 'er she didn't have no rights here a-tall. He tol' 'er they were'nt no will, an' she was a 'poster! Yes suh!" The cook had glanced up through the window. "Thar 's the young missus now. She's a heap bad medicine, boss. Windy Mills, he's sweet on 'er, an' she stol' my bes' butcher knife foh to entertain Windy—"

"Where are those fellows now?"

"They'll be here come supper-time, 'r roust me out to git supper when they come, whatever time it is. Boss, I'd a-quit an' gone long ago, but I can't walk clear to town, an' when they go off, they turn all the hosses out to pasture. The young missus she's been out there now tryin' to git one. Boss, I'se plumb happy ovah yuh arrival though you come a-shootin'—"

Buck watched from a window as the girl, dragging a coil of loose rope, crawled through the pasture fence and, staring hard toward the two men by the corral water trough, seemed hesitating in whether or not to approach them.

Buck left the house and walked down that way.

The slim, dark-eyed girl, seeing that they were strangers, had come doubtfully toward young Red and Juan. She was tired, hot, her face was red, her hair was in a tangle, her shoes and stockings dust-covered, and she carried the rope as if it were heavy.

Red had taken the saddle from his horse, a flannel rag from his war bag and, wringing this out in cold water, was carefully wiping the back of his horse, all the while talking abusively. The horse, understanding the affectionate tone and not the insulting words, muzzled against him:

"—idee, a top-hand puncher like me gotta be chambermaid to a skinful o' lazy bones like you. If yuh was a *good* hoss I wouldn't mind none, but doggone yore wall-eyed soul, yuh ain't! I'd trade yuh f'r a hoss-shoe with tail hairs tied to 'er. You lousy ol' ——."

Juan, from his saddle, with a leg across the horn, smoked a thin cigaret and wondered if Red was not touched with loco. Juan did not see any reason for washing the back of a horse that had no saddle sores. Then noticing the girl who, after looking at them uncertainly, had decided to come near, he said—

"The señorita, she comes."

Red, wet rag in hand, turned, stared and waited.

The girl appeared tired and angry.

"Who are you men?" she asked.

"Lady," Red began politely, "we don't allow to be intrudin' none since we—"

"Will you do something for me?"

"Miss, I'd lay right down an' let yuh tromp on me if—"

"Will you go out in that pasture and catch a horse for me?"

"Have you been trapsin' 'round out there on yore own hoofs tryin' for to rope a hoss?" Red inquired incredulously. "No man livin' c'd do it, less the hoss wanted him to!"

Then, with suspicion, she asked—

"Saunders didn't send you men here?"

"Not jus' the way yuh mean, no, ma'am. I don't think as how you 'll see over-much of him no more. He don't feel spry 'nough to work hard like he uster, so—"

Jane Allen frowned distrustfully, not understanding this manner of speech, and in the short time she had been at the ranch she had learned to distrust, almost despise, all these Western men.

Red was saying:

"I'll jus' throw a saddle on Trix here, hop out an' bring in a hoss f'r you—two hosses —twenty if yuh want." Turning for his blankets he noticed Buck who was coming down to them. "Here he is now, miss. This here is Laurence La Rue, yore cousin."

Jane became as if frozen with surprize and distrust.

"*You*, you are Laurence?" she said tensely.

"Howd' do," Buck answered, pulling at his hat.

Neither appeared to have anything more to say. Buck looked at her with interest and grinned. She stared steadily, almost angrily, finding all of her prejudice confirmed by his face and grin.

"I'm saddlin' up for to run in some hosses like she asked," said Red.

"What was you wantin' of a hoss for?" Buck inquired.

"Haven't I the right to a horse on this place," she asked sharply, and her eyes snapped, "if I want?"

"I reckon. Yeah. Unh-huhn," said Buck, and what she took for an insolent smile and tone exasperated her. "I was thinkin' if yuh didn't want to go far, here's my hoss. Ain't many on four legs that is as good. He's some tired, but he'd be tickled to carry you. He's a p'lite hoss that away."

"I am going far," she snapped.

"All right then, Red, you light out an' get in the hosses so we can pick her a gentle one."

Red mounted and rode around toward the gate of the horse corral as if to jump it, then Trix with a kind of stiff-legged skittering stopped short. Red leaned from the saddle, opened the gate, passed through, shut the gate, and went riding out into the pasture as if dashing to the rescue of some fair maiden.

"Why ain't the boys had a hoss up here

for you to ride?" asked Buck. "You should 've tol' 'em."

"You *know* why!" she answered angrily. "That Mr. Barley there in town said he was afraid the 'boys' would not like our being here because they are all your friends."

"He did, huh? Well he is shore one powerful liar, that Barley. How they goin' be *my* friends when they ain't ever seen me?"

"I shall not argue with you at all, and you need not try to explain. I want nothing to do with you at all, sir. You have no right here. It isn't, Heaven knows, that I want this old ranch; but your father did not want you to have it, or a dollar off of it. I'm ashamed to be related to *you!*"

Buck smiled broadly.

"Yeah? But maybe I changed some. Folks there in town 'lowed I'd changed. I didn't' spect yuh to be over-welcomin', but you ort a-give a feller a show."

"I believe you know how mother and I have been treated here!"

"I got suspicions an' I'm powerful surprized. In this here country women are mighty welcome an' admired, so—"

"There must be some men in this miserable country, though—" she was looking straight and defiantly at Buck— "though I doubt it from what I have seen—" then, spitefully— "and *heard!*"

"Yeah. You can hear a powerful lot that ain't so, too."

Indignantly she saw that the little old Mexican, who looked villainous, was examining her with a leisurely stare. She knew that her hat was awry, her hair dishevelled, her clothes soiled, her face red and sweaty, but she did not care. She would rather have looked a fright than not. She felt that never, never in her life, would she want any man to think her pretty. She turned to walk farther away from them, but Buck said:

"It's gettin' along late in the day, an' after dark won't be no time for a lady as don't know the country to be ridin' far. Which way was you thinkin' of goin'?"

"Wherever I please," she said.

"To town?"

"No, not to town. As much as some people would like it, I am not going that far away from this ranch."

"Which way was you countin' on ridin'?"

"I don't see that I need to tell you. I think if anybody has the right to do as they please on this ranch, I have!"

"You an' me have opinions similiar, but—"

"But what?"

"This here is the kind o country that it is easy to get lost in, an' less yuh know where you're goin' an' how to get there, you ought to have some company."

"I shall go alone, thank you. I'm only going to a neighbor's and—"

"Neighbors? You ain't got no neighbors. You've jus' got some folks as live in the same part o' the country."

"To Mr. Spencer's ranch," she said.

Buck nodded.

"Yeah, an' I don't blame yuh none. You mean to tell Spencer about the goin's on here, hopin' there'll be *some* man, as yuh just said, that'll r'ar up over women bein' mistreated. Juan, how far d' yuh say it is to Spencer's place?"

"Forty miles, señor."

"You can't go to Spencer's tonight, miss. An' do yuh know the way? Shore you don't. Besides, you don't need to go tearin' away over there lookin' for a *man.* There's one on yore ranch now that's not scairt o' nothin', an' he's perticular polite to ladies—"

"You are speaking of yourself, I presume!" she said, looking right at him.

"No. Nope. I'm talkin' about that fellow Red. You saw how eager he was to get you a hoss an' all. Well, he's jus' p'lite, natural. But he has got some powerful queer idees about honesty. Now I can see yuh settin' yore mouth to say that's why he's a friend o' mine, but it ain't. They ain't nothin' queer about my idees o' honesty—they're jus' normal. Next time you see yore friend Barley, you ask 'im. I was too blame hones' for him an'—"

"You," said Jane Allen, exasperated and in no mood for pleasantry, "are not in the least amusing."

She threw the rope aside and walked off. From a distance her mother saw her and called, then came hurriedly toward her daughter.

III

THEY heard a far shrill shout, and a bunch of horses as if flying through the dust came over a rise, and behind them Red Clark.

"Seems a good string, Juan," said Buck, looking with the critical scrutiny of a man who knew good horses.

They had stormed into the big circular corral and milled about excitedly, each trying to get in behind some other in the hope of being overlooked.

"Which one you want, miss?" Red bawled from his saddle, shouting over the top of the corral.

"Any one," she answered.

"Any one!" Red yelled. "Some o' these are wild broncs—you can't ride 'em."

"I want a horse, just a horse!" she called, coming to the corral.

"Then you can shore have 'im! There's a big black, he's got saddle marks—"

Red slid from the saddle, rope in hand, and the big black, as though he understood the English language perfectly, wheeled and squeezed in behind other horses, but the noose flew across their backs and dropped lightly over his head.

"Pretty work," said Buck out of the corner of his mouth to Juan.

As the rope touched him the black became quiet and docile, and reluctantly, but without pulling back at all, allowed himself to be led into the center of the corral.

"Turn all these others out, I guess," said Red, dropping a couple of half hitches over the snubbing post.

Juan opened the gate leading into the pasture, and the horses after trampling doubtfully, bolted—pretending that they were escaping in spite of the men.

"You've picked a nice little playmate you have," Buck commented, looking at the build of the powerful horse. "Want to kill my purtty cousin?"

"He may not be so gentle, but he's been rode. An' he's goin' a-be rode agin before any purtty girl gits on 'im," Red answered, running his hand along the horse's back and down under his belly. The horse did not flinch, but with head lowered and ears sagging, appeared dully indifferent. "An'," Red continued, "ary hoss that's been rode onct c'n be rode twict if there 's a certain aw-burn haired gentleman name o' Clark on the landscape. Are yuh innercent or are yuh imposterin'?" he inquired, patting the black's cheek. "Trix—" this to his own mare as he loosened the cinches—"yuh jus' speak up an' tell this feller he can save hisself some exercise by not tryin' to unload me. Blackie—" Red was carefully smoothing a blanket over the black's back—"you're a danged good lookin' hoss. Yeah. Yuh got shoulders like a buff'lo an' hips like a greyhoun'. Yuh ort to feel some honored that a jedge o' hossflesh like me picked yuh out to carry a purtty girl—"

The pretty girl looked on absorbedly from just inside the gate.

"This here saddle," said Red. "has been on the backs o' mighty good hosses. An' Blackie, if yuh've got hoss-sense you'll be proud o' yoreself."

Gently he laid the saddle across the black, and the black threw back an ear and glanced sidewise, but remained in his tracks.

"A killer," said Buck. "Look at his build. I bet this hoss commits murder jus' to entertain hisself."

"This here little black lamb?" Red asked, reaching warily for a cinch. "This here is a lady's hoss, ain't yuh, you black hearted son o' Satan's maw? Juan, fetch me yore hackamore, will yuh? Mine 's only a half breed bit, but I never like to discourage a hoss none if he wants to pitch."

"You're crazy," said Buck.

"I ain't. If I can't ride a hoss when he's got his head I'll git off an' walk."

Juan brought a hair halter and Red fitted it to the black, then cast loose his rope. The black stood quietly.

"Son," said Red, rubbing his hand along the black's neck, "I got suspicions o' you. It ain't natural to be so disinterested as yuh pertendin'. Miss—" turning toward Jane—"you an' yore maw had better climb the fence now, 'cause maybe this hoss won't ra'r none, but maybe he will. Like some folks I've knowed, he looks too danged innercent to be trusted."

Red cheeked the black, drawing his head around, fitted a foot into the stirrup and paused questioningly, but the black was as quiet as a tired dray horse.

"Afraid," said Jane aside to her mother.

Red hit the saddle, and the next moment he appeared to be bouncing toward Heaven with only one foot in the stirrup. The black with humping plunges bucked in a circle round the corral, and it seemed that a hair's weight would have unseated Red; but he kept his hands free, kept his balance, and with his foot groped for the flying stirrup. At every jump there was sunshine between the seat of his trousers and the leather. But Juan, who in his younger days had been the top horse-breaker for old George La Rue, sucked air between his teeth admiringly. He saw that Red kept his eyes focused on the ears of the black

devil and was out-guessing him at every plunge.

"A *vaquero*, señor! A *vaquero!*" Juan said softly to Buck, and the next moment both Juan and Buck were scrambling wildly for the corral fence. The black appeared to have overheard and suddenly resented the compliment to his rider.

From the top of the fence Buck shouted—

"What you mean, chasin' yore boss like that!"

Red tossed his hand and grinned. He had got his foot into the stirrup, and the black, who knew it as well as he, suddenly stood stiff-legged and sulky.

"Best one-legged rider I ever saw!" said Buck derisively, reaching for papers and tobacco, but he forgot his cigaret.

The black went into the air and came down with his head where his tail had been; then, humped like a drawn bow, he seemed to clack all four hoofs together with his head between his fore legs. He hopped stiff-legged, reared, wheeled, and bit at Red's chaps.

"Why yuh dang cann'bal!" said Red, and struck deep with spurs and quirt; but what further remarks he had in mind were jarred out of him.

The black plunged sidewise, switched ends and charged in a stiff-legged zig-zag, humping himself at every bound; then without once having warned his rider by rearing, suddenly reared and fell, throwing himself backward, straight over, horse and rider together.

A cry of horror came from the corral gate, and Jane, peering into the dust, said:

"Oh he's killed!"

Buck dropped tobacco and papers as he jumped, and a moment later Juan had both knees planted on the horse's head while Buck groped at the dust-covered figure.

"Dang it, let him up! He's on my leg!" Red sputtered through the layer of dust on his face.

"Thought you was squashed—come on, take that top foot outta the stirrup—come on, get off!" said Buck, pulling to help as Juan, having twisted the hackamore into a vice-like hold, raised the horse to its knees.

"Let *him* up! Git away you dang fools! Let me 'lone! I don't git off no dang hoss till he's rode or I'm throwed! Git 'way from me!" Red protested angrily.

"Get off!" said Buck, pulling. "He'll kill yuh! He knows the trick!"

"Think I'm ever goin' have a hoss look me in the eye an' say, 'Yuh c'dn't do it, c'd yuh!' Git 'way from me!"

"Juan," Buck called, stepping back, "go get a shovel an' start diggin' a grave!"

Juan let go and jerked himself back as the horse snapped at him, and Juan swore feelingly in rippling Spanish as he backed to the fence.

The black struggled to his feet, shook himself, turned his head with a look of angry inquity at the hatless, dust-begrimed figure, alertly motionless in the saddle.

"If it wasn't agin my princ'ples," said Red angrily, "I'd kill *you*, you danged black hearted ol'—"

The black went into the air, landed stiff-legged, reared, but Red was wary and he threw his weight forward, striking blow on blow with the quirt against the black's head, and the horse leaped forward, ran half way around the corral and stopped, braced expectantly.

"Now you know jus' as well as I do it ain't fair to r'ar back on a feller! Come on, buck if you want!"

And the black bucked, bucked on one spot, on a ten cent piece, straight up and down, around and around as if he were made of steel springs, but Red, bleeding from mouth and nose, stayed with him.

"Yeah," Buck called to Juan. "He said he could ride some. I 'low he can, a little."

Then, abruptly, the horse stopped.

"If I was yore size an' had you in the saddle—" Red gasped drunkenly.

The horse made three or four jumps forward and stopped again, looking back at him.

"Git on with the circus, git on with the circus!" said Red huskily, jerking the hackamore.

The black walked forward, sulkily. Red stabbed him lightly with the spurs.

"Come on. It ain't no disgrace to be rode by a feller named Clark. Dang you, for an amachoor, you pitch first rate." And, wiping the blood from his mouth on his sleeve, he called: "Open that gate, miss. We're goin' for a ride!"

The horse reluctantly took up a slow trot, and reaching the open gate, went through. Then he stopped, stiff-legged, braced to buck.

"Suit yoreself, son!" said Red the untamable, and struck with the spurs.

The horse leaped forward into a gallop, galloping easily, submissively, and yielding

submissively to the pull of the hackamore, made a wide circle, and returned to the corral gate, stopping.

The cook was there. He had so far laid aside the prerogatives of the kitchen as to come in person to say that dinner was ready; and for about the tenth time he was telling:

"No man alive 'cept ol' Mr. George hisself ever rode that hoss! I seen him kill one man myself, I did, an' there was another un I heard tell about!"

Red slid from the saddle. Blood had dried about his face, he was caked with dust and grime, blood and sweat; he could hardly stand, but he said:

"Miss, this here is a mighty good hoss, but if I was you, I'd take little Trix there. Times, Trix she pitches some to make out she ain't gittin' old, but first she allus looks around, soci'ble like, much as to say, 'All set, Red?' It'd break her heart if she was to throw me. Some women are that away too I reckon. They r'ar an' carry-on, but they wouldn't have no use for a man if he let hisself git throwed. Miss, I'll jus' have one o' the boys throw a saddle on Trix f'r you an—"

"I am not going—thank you—but I—I am not going," said the girl, looking at him with a kind of staring fascination, shocked by the blood on his face and clothes, thrilled by the way he had ridden. Then, angrily, she glanced at Buck.

Buck, speaking to be overheard, was saying to Juan:

"I've seen a lot o' pore riders, but none more disheartin'. This here feller seems to think all you got a-do to ride a hoss is to stay in the saddle! Jus' like I was tellin' you, Juan, a boy with red hair can't have good ridin' qualities—"

Red grinned awkwardly, happily; for though the girl was angered by the slurring words, Red felt warm and pleased because of the praise. It was the tone, the tone and not the words, that carried meaning on the range.

CHAPTER VI

SAUNDERS' MEN

THAT evening Juan and Buck walked down near the horse corral for a little talk.

All the horses excepting Buck's had been turned loose into the pasture, and his was loose and feeding somewhere about the house.

"Nobody can ever catch 'im," Buck had said to Red. "But he never goes far an' comes when I whistle."

From where Buck and Juan stood they could see a dim square of light shining through the open window of the room used by Mrs. Allen and Jane. They disliked living there, so close to the bunk room, but there was no other place fit to stay in. They had examined the house La Rue had abandoned many years before when his wife had left, and found it in a state of dismal dilapidation, full of creepy things, and great hairy-legged spiders that made even Jane, who was less timid than her mother, rather choose to remain near the men than near the tarantulas.

A starlit darkness lay over the ranch, and it was still as the heart of the wilderness. From afar, here and there, a lonely coyote yelped, seeming to inquire with petulant wail if any of its brethern roving over the land had nosed out anything to eat.

Up at the bunk house, Red Clark, with a candle burning dimly on a shelf above his head, lay with eyes open and meditated. He had been badly jarred and was glad to lie still and think. It puzzled him a little to have seen how displeased the women appeared to be with their relative. He thought they should have been welcomingly, since they had been so annoyed by Saunders and his men.

"Funny," said Red. Also, "Mighty purtty girl."

Juan and Buck, idling in the dark by the corral, had no intention of turning into their bunks. They meant to await the return of the men who, the cook said, were sure to come shooting and yelling, and whatever hour they came would make him pile out and get a hot supper.

"Not tonight, maybe," Buck told him. "You throw some grub on the table, Henry, an' turn in. They'll eat a cold one—or none. Most likely none."

"Boss, don't yuh go an' git yo'self hurt ovah me. Cause then I'd catch mo' ——."

Juan now twirled a cigaret about as thick as a wheat straw, lighted it, inhaled and spoke softly—

"A *vaquero*, Señor Buck, that red one."

"Yeah. Queer galoot, that kid. When he brags you don't know whether he's makin' fun o' hisself or tryin' to tell the

truth. There in town he spoke up kind-a favor'ble of hisself as a buster. He's got the right, I reckon. I wonder if he's really *honest*, like he says. He'd be a mighty good hand, Juan, to shove bullets through a car window."

"Have you ever needed more or better, señor?" Juan inquired with a mild suggestion of reproach.

"But now I reckon there ain't goin' be no more Harrison gang, with the boys breakin' away from the Old Man that away. They're goin' get all shot up, shore. When they get roamin' loose, they ain't got a lick o' sense. An' dad, he's gettin' old an' tired o' the game. It ain't fun with him no more—jus' work. My cousin's a purtty girl, don't yuh think?"

Juan shrugged his shoulders in the darkness.

"Bet when she's spruced up she 'll be a picture. But she shore don't like me. An' me such a handsome fellow, too! I think maybe I'll have to show 'er I ain't such a bad fellow."

Juan, from the corners of his eyes, looked at him, smiling though the smile was hid. An odd fellow, this Señor Buck. He had no love of women, Juan knew that, but it was oddly as if he thought women were better than they were. What he did like was the dangerous edge of excitement, and was irrepressibly headlong, audaciously self-confident, likely to do anything; and he was a killer, cruelly ready to shoot it out, and had a gambler's love of the big risk. But, somehow, it all seemed fun to him.

"Juan, you mosey up to the bunk house, an' see that Red don't get to prowlin' round. I'm goin' to sneak up to that window there an' stretch my ears. Take these along with yuh—" Buck stooped and unbuckled his spurs—"an' leave 'em by my saddle."

II

BUCK, half crouching and on tip-toes, approached the window, edging close and listening.

"—a brutal barbarous country! And Mother, you remember what people told us! 'So few women there you will be treated like queens.' Queens! *Hmm-mm!* Like that French queen that had her head cut off! Now that awful Laurence La Rue is here, it will be worse."

"Jane, we must leave this country."

"We must not! I will stay. He has a perfectly villainous face—tries to be smart. You heard the spiteful things he said about that ugly red-headed boy who *did* that horse wonderfully. It was just the way you would expect Larry La Rue to talk of some one who had done something he couldn't. I hate him!"

"Shh-h *Jane!* That, oh that is no way for a young girl to talk!"

"Young! You call me young after almost three weeks here? I was seventeen when I came. I'm old enough to be my own grandmother now. I know I'm getting gray-headed."

"If Laurence were only the right sort of man, what a relief it would be, having him here."

"Yes," said the daughter quickly, "and if the devil were only the right sort of fellow, what a—"

"*Jane!*"

"Yes, Mother?"

"How can you! That is swearing, almost."

"If you'd heard me out in that pasture this afternoon you wouldn't think this was—"

"Why, Jane!"

"They'd let me get up sometimes to within fifty feet, then run! They were perfect beasts that way. And I don't care. I *did* swear. I said—"

"Jane! Jane, don't you dare repeat—"

"All right, then. But now I'm wondering just what I would have done if I had caught a horse—one like that awful black. But if I were a horse I would want to kill men. I feel like doing it anyhow!"

"I don't know what's come over you," said the weary mother. "It must be this awful country."

"Mother, do you know what I would like to do?"

"No, and I'm almost afraid to hear."

"I would like to hire some terribly bad men—"

"What has made you like this? You talk—"

"—and have *my* men make life so miserable for these men—make them go out to catch horses on foot, like I did! I'd give anything just to follow them around and listen to—"

"Jane, why you—you talk—how you talk!"

"Yes, but, Mother, you should hear what I think. Then you would be shocked!"

Presently they heard cheerful whistling, then heavy steps, and a minute later a shadowy figure approached the open door.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Allen, starting up uneasily.

"Me, La Rue. Could you an' me have a little talk, ma'am?"

"It's rather late," said Mrs. Allen, not wanting to talk.

"It won't take long, an' it's business."

It was Jane who said—

"Come in."

"Thank yuh, miss."

Mrs. Allen moved back into the room. This room like the rest of the house was of adobe with a dirt floor. There were two narrow unglassed windows, two heavy doors, one leading into the bunk room, that had never been much used and was now barred with a piece of rough hewn timber. A wide bunk fitted into a corner by this door. There was a chair, a stool, a small shelf table where a candle was burning. On the floor near a wall were two or three suitcases.

"Sit down," said Mrs. Allen.

"No thanks, ma'am. I'll stand," and Buck leaned against a door post.

The women regarded him with suspicion, for he smiled; and they thought that his smile was very much like that of a man who meant something malicious. Jane inspected him critically. He now seemed much taller than she had thought. His face was lean and brown. She did not like that twisted smile, more than a smile—it was a grin, and unpleasantly mirthful. She could not recall having noticed before that he had worn two revolvers. She did notice, because his boots were more polished and less dusty where the straps had been, that he was without spurs, but she did not give it a second thought.

Buck was saying:

"—I reckon you women got some rights here as well as me, an' if you 've got that will, I'll vamose. I ain't up on law, but I reckon all heirs get a whack. The only reason that 'ministrator Barley ain't an out-an'-out hoss thief is, him bein' a cripple, he can't set a saddle. You-all have got hard feelin's toward me, but you're goin' get over 'em. Yeah. An' what I come for 'specially was to say as how you, miss, you was wantin' to go over to Spencer's—I'm goin' over there myself in a day 'r two for a talk with Jake, an' you folks can come 'long. An' 'nother thing, you all ain't goin' be bothered much no more by Saunders 'r his men. There in town I asked Saunders for to keep away from the Eighty-Eight, permanent—"

"You did what?" asked Mrs. Allen. "I don't understand."

"I fired 'im."

Jane spoke up rashly—

"I don't believe it!"

Buck grinned at her, his eyes steady. He appeared unangered, but she felt that there was something hidden and dangerous behind his smile, as if he had a secret advantage. She suspected too that his fair speech was to win favor, and that he was just as bad as ever she had thought.

"What you b'lieve an' what's so, Miss, ain't the same thing in more ways 'an one. But if yuh want, you can think that I explained nice an' perlite to Saunders that me, bein' a good cow hand, I c'd run the ranch without him helpin'. 'Night."

He bobbed his head toward Mrs. Allen, and backed quickly from the doorway, leaving them flustered and doubtful, listening to his shrill whistling as he tramped off.

III

OUT of the darkness came the sound of hoofs, the sharp *ee-eye-eel* of men, then the popping of guns.

"The parade I reckon it has started," said Buck. "Yeah."

He peered from the bunk room and saw dimly the distant forms of four or five riders, and vividly the upward spurts of flame as they fired.

"Now remember—" this more to Red than to Juan—"I'm wishful to do all the talkin'. I've noticed too the ground 'round here is hard an' dry, so personal, I don't want a-have to dig no graves."

A minute or two later the horsemen, circling the ranch house like charging Indians, galloped furiously, yelled fiercely, shot wildly but overhead as if at the stars.

Then they raced for the corral. It was too far for La Rue to see in the starlight, but he knew that they were unsaddling, throwing their saddles under the *ramada*, turning the horses loose into the pasture, excepting one which would be kept in the corral to bring the others up in the morning.

Buck, alone, waited out of sight in the

dark behind a tall post that helped support the porch-like roof between bunk house and dining room. The men came straggling up with clattering scrape of spurs and hubbub of talk. They were almost merry, almost as if a little drunk, but Buck soon decided that they were merely pleasantly excited.

"I'll be ——!" a voice said loudly. "There ain't no light in the kitchen."

"No sir, would yuh b'lieve it! That black —— ain't up yit, after all the trouble we took to wake 'im!"

"Windy, an' I wonder did the girl hear *you* come? I didn't see her hand wavin' none as we rode by, an' I looked perticular."

"I wonder which is bashfuller, him or the girl. He shore is plumb scairt to git clost to 'er."

"Wonder why Slab he ain't back yit?"

"We done a good day's work, awright. Slab 'll be some tickled."

"Shet up!" a voice warned.

"Aw go to ——, you. Ain't we done work an' rode hard? The women can hear all I gotta say, an' not be none wiser."

Stumbling in the dark and crowding against one another, they entered the dining room.

"We'll scare that black boy white!"

"Where's that —— lantern?" one asked, holding a match. He was jostled, the match went out; the fellow swore.

"*Yi-ee-i-oh!*"

Some one shot rapidly into the ceiling.

"Ort to know better, that nigger!"

There was a confusion of voices, the clanking trample of feet, here and there the scrape and flare of a match. The chimney of a lantern was lifted, a match touched the wick, and its light flickered up into their faces.

"Well I'll be ——, if that cook ain't set a table o' cold grub!"

"Come on fellers, let's ride 'im!"

"Boys," the cook yelled, "I 's gittin' up. I sho' is!"

The cook had a bunk at one side of the kitchen, and as the kitchen was merely one end of the dining room, he had long been wide awake, sitting up, trying to obey Buck's order to "stay between the covers after they come."

And now from the doorway Buck inquired—

"What's all this ruckus?"

The men turned their heads, staring. The voice was a stranger's. Their shadows in the lantern light were blotted with huge outline against the walls, and twisting their heads around in abrupt staring gave a momentary appearance of men with broken necks. A shuffling of feet followed as they faced about, standing with a sort of flat-footed wonder, gaping. The hand that held the lantern was raised at arm's length, and men bent forward under the light, peering.

"*Who* the —— are you?"

"Me, I'm the new foreman," said Buck.

"Hahn?"

"Yo're what?"

"Where's Slab?"

"Yo're *who?*"

They glanced one at another, uncertainly, then again at Buck. The man with the lantern came closer. Others moved along with him; they came slowly, not at all understanding how it could be that this fellow was who he claimed to be; and they peered searchingly, examining him, judging him.

Whoever he might be, one thing was certain, he wore two guns and that was the sign of either a fool or a killer. It was not always easy at a glance to tell which. But this fellow, claiming to be foreman, standing with an unlighted cigaret in his hand, did not have the ear-cut of a fool. He looked range-bred and alert.

"Did yuh say you was *foreman?*"

"Yore ears are acc'rate. An' I told the cook to fix some supper there. I knowed you fellers would be hungry an' want to eat quick. It ain't right to make men wait this time o' night. So set an' chew."

The words were conciliating enough, but there was the shadow of something in his tone that wasn't, in range speech, just conformitous.

They glanced about at the table set with cold potatoes, cold steaks, cold gravy, cold biscuits, a big pot of cold coffee.

"——," said one fellow doubtfully. "Is this here a joke 'r what?"

"Do I look like a joke-feller?" Buck inquired.

"Where's Saunders?"

"Yeah, where's Slab Saunders?"

"How'd you come to be foreman this away?"

"Jim Barley, there in town, allowed as how Saunders wasn't workin' for the Eighty-Eight no more. So I come out to take charge. Yeah."

There was a muttered swearing; they again looked at one another with doubtful stares as if each knew what the other thought, and all could make a good guess as to why Saunders was no longer foreman; but one asked—

"Did yuh hear jus' why Slab he was fired?"

"I allow somehow he didn't want the job no longer—else wasn't wanted."

"Slab he didn't send no word to me? Me, I'm Windy Mills," inquired one of the forms that stood in a lurching attitude, watchful, doubtful.

"Not by me he didn't. No."

"Well it's plumb funny. Slab quittin' *now*," said a voice in which surprize and indignation were mingled.

"What might yore name be?" some one inquired.

"Me," Buck answered offhand, "I'm La Rue."

"Hanhn?"

"La Rue?"

"You young La Rue?"

"Where 'd you come from anyhow?"

"Well I'll be ——!"

"Now you boys eat yore supper," Buck told them, "An' turn in. In the mornin' we'll all have a talk. 'Night."

He stepped back out of the doorway and, abruptly as it had appeared, his figure was lost in the shadows. They could hear him walking heavily into the bunk room.

But they had no way of knowing that he crawled through a window and noiselessly came back along side of the house, then tip-toed to the open door of the dining room and listened.

The men were speaking confusedly, one to another, each with wonder of what had happened to Slab. A furtive undertone crept into their voices; they cast sly, inquiring glances at each other, for now being without a leader and having much on their minds, they did not know just how to act, certainly not what to think.

"Shore takes the edge off our game," said one.

"Aw no it don't, maybe," another protested.

Two or three faces turned doubtfully toward the dark end of the room where the cook had his bunk; and some one said with low insistence—

"Careful what yuh say!"

They had ridden far and hard that day and had come in hungry; but it was almost with an air of not knowing what else to do that they began climbing over the benches and to seat themslves before the cold supper. Knives rattled, dishes clicked; for a time hardly any one spoke, each was thoughtful and there was a noisy chewing and drinking.

"I wonder was he thinkin' to do us a favor with this —— supper or —" The man broke off the sentence and gazed from face to face, inquiringly.

After a pause some one asked—

"Is he turned in, yuh reckon?"

No one answered, but in a moment or two a voice remarked—

"Kinda got hisself ornamented with hardware, I'll allow."

This drew the response of a vague, noncommital "yeah" from two or three men.

"Goin' have a talk in the mornin', he said."

"Unh-huhn. Wonder what there is to talk about? Any you fellers know anything yuh want a-talk about?"

One or two faces took on a wide knowing grin, and some nodded in a way that was much as if giving the sign of a secret lodge.

"Hey cook!" Windy Mills called.

"Yes'ah!" the cook answered promptly from his distant bunk.

"When did that feller La Rue come?"

" 'S afternoon he rode in."

"What'd he say? Anything? Ask any questions?"

"Boss, he was plumb oncur'ous."

"Did them women give him a hard luck yarn?"

"No sah, no sah. They 'peared scairt o' him. That's a fac'."

A man across the table from Windy spoke up hopefully—

"Say, Windy, mebbe it's goin' be all right."

"All right my sore eye!" Windy answered. "Ain't it all his if no will is found?" Then, lowering his voice, clinching his argument, "An' is a feller goin' steal cows from hisself?"

Another man spoke up—

"You know, first off, when he said he was the new foreman, I thought Barley he'd got on to things, an' that was why he'd fired Slab."

"So'd I reckon we all sort a-thought that."

Windy Mills poured himself another cup of thick black coffee, then pushed the plates and dishes from before him, and leaned forward heavily on his elbows. He spoke with

a confidential air, but his voice, untrained to inflectional softness, carried farther than to those about the table.

"Fellers, he may be wearin' of two guns now, but from what they say o' him in this here country, he ain't the *hombre* to use 'em none. You all know that. Ol' George they say kicked him from the porch out there plumb down to the corral, a cussin' him at ever' kick. You know Hendryx, the ol' stage man there in Perez? 'Twas over his girl. This feller got her to rob her dad. He ruint her, then tol' her she wasn't nothin' but a half-breed anyhow, 'r some such thing. She come a-ridin' out here to ol' George, an' ol' George he taken this feller an' knocks him down, an' kicks 'im—kicks 'im clare down to the hoss corral. That's what folks they say anyhow."

"I've heard the same. Yeah. An' I was thinkin' of it as I looked at him here t'night, standin' there so high an' mighty."

"Now he comes back up here an' gits ol' George's ranch, the which proper b'longs to them women."

Low laughter followed, and one spoke, the tone carrying meaning beyond the words—

"Ain't none of 'em goin' git so much as they think by a —— of a sight."

"Too —— bad waterholes they ain't got legs too—we'd be sendin' some o' them over the back trail!"

Voices growled warningly at this. Some men glanced quickly to the right and left, and one warned—

"Careful o' that nigger."

"Fellers"— Windy Mills again dropped his voice confidentially—"if he was to find he couldn't run this here ranch, if she was to be too much for 'im, I reckon he'd be hopeful to git somebody back as could. It 's a man-sized job, runnin' a big ranch like this here. I reckon Slab *could* be hired for to come back. He'd jus' about make one good-sized swoller f'r Slab."

Chuckles followed the intimation that Saunders *could* be hired to come back, for while Jim Barley schemed to beat the heirs out of their property, Saunders had quite naturally set about beating both Barley and the heirs. An honest cowman would not have fallen in with Barley's plans; and a dishonest one, like Saunders, was quick to take advantage of such a chance to rustle for himself.

"Them women, I bet," Windy went on, hunching over as if to bring his mouth closer to their ears, "has got more downright spunk I bet than this here feller."

"Windy he's been powerful admirin' o' that girl ever since she nearly prodded 'im with the butcher knife!"

"Now you shet up. This here's business," said Windy, grinning a little.

"You think a feller could be scairt offen his own ranch?" a man by Windy's side inquired, shaking his head doubtfully as he spoke.

"*Some* fellers could."

"Yeah," said a cautious voice. "But if it was to come out what we'd been up to, then we'd all have to skedaddle."

"Who 's to make us? Huhn? Ain't ever' man o' us here all right? Ain't we got Cunnin'ham back o' us? An' he's too big f'r anybody much to meddle with. Why, we'd all pitch in to hang a feller as was caught brandin' a calf, but we ain't—" the word fell in a low, almost inaudible whisper —"rustlers. We, —— it, we're jus' naturally movin' the Eight'-Eight brand clear down to Mexico!"

Buck, listening from outside the door, had failed to hear all that was said, but he had caught fragments here and there, and readily understood.

Now quietly he moved away from the door and went down to the corral. He opened the gate that led to the pasture and ran out the horse, then closed the gate and returned to the house in a roundabout way so as not to be seen if the men should have left the dining room. But they still sat at the table, talking.

Their voices stopped as they heard him coming, and every man peered at the doorway before he could be seen; and with even stronger and more searching interest they now examined him as he came just inside the door. He was rolling a cigaret as he entered, and he continued to roll it as he spoke, but not for the flicker of an instant did he glance toward his fingers.

"I been standin' all along just outside the door, here, listenin'—" he said it without anger and seemed even to smile, though the odd twist of his mouth was a queer sort of smile. He paused, holding the unmoistened cigaret about level with his waist as he reached in a shirt pocket for a match.

"Yeah, I could hear purtty well—" he drew the match across the end of the table —"an' bein' as how you fellers are minded

for to scare me—" he put the cigaret to his mouth, lighted it, puffed—"minded to scare me offen my own ranch, I thought I'd come right along in an' get scared *now!*"

He stopped, waiting. No one spoke and no one moved. He held the cigaret in one hand and fingered the burnt match in the other.

"Or is it," he inquired, "as how you used up all yore shells a-scarin' the women folks when you rode in?"

He appeared curiously unangered, and fingered the cigaret and match just as though he did not carry guns and might have to reach for them; but each man of the five that faced him had the sensation of being singled out by the steady gaze of Buck's deep-set narrowed eyes; and his odd look of amusement puzzled them, gave them the feeling that he had some concealed, undetected advantage. On top of this, theirs was a confused guiltiness from having been overheard and in now having their bluff called in a way so matter of fact.

"Entertain' it was too," he went on, "a-hearin' about me gettin' kicked a couple o' hundred yards down to the corral. First I heard tell of it. Yeah. I kind a-doubt that there story myself." He paused, then, "Which o' you 's got the mighty 'propriate name o' Windy?"

No one spoke up, but some glanced toward Windy Mills, who stiffened a little at being singled out and he drew his brows into a frown. Then the frown relaxed into a kind of muddled blankness as Windy recalled that he had told this fellow who he was— "Me, I'm Windy Mills"—when inquiring if Saunders had sent any message.

"Me havin' as you might say a sort o' personal interest in this here Eighty-Eight," said Buck, eying Windy, "I'd admire to hear some more in perticular about the plan o' movin' her clear down to Mexico. Yeah. You all 'peared to think it was a plumb good idee. Maybe as how I would too. Unh-huhn. Le's hear some more."

He stopped as if pausing to hear them talk. The only reply was a nervous shuffling of feet underneath the table, a kind of hang-dog dropping of glances and furtive peering from lowered faces.

"I bet you fellers have been bunchin' my cows back in the mountains some'eres. Do I call the turn?"

Somebody cleared his throat, and the others waited expectantly, but the fellow did not speak. Another picked up papers and tobacco sack that lay on the table, but rolled only a misshapen cigaret, and this with difficulty.

"Now," Buck said with an air of finality, "if you fellers ain't a-goin' scare me, like I was hopeful you would, I reckon we'd better not wait till mornin' for our talk. You fellers are quittin' now. Get yore traps an' start yore travelin'!"

The men stirred without getting off their seats; they looked at one another, each hopeful that the other would move first, or speak. No one wanted to knuckle down first, each was willing to follow the other.

Without turning his head, Buck called—"Hey, Juan!"

"*Si, señor,*" the Mexican answered from the dark.

"You, an' Jim an' Joe an' Charley and two or three o' the other boys jus' distribute yoreselfs out in the dark there around the house. This parcel o' cow-thieves seem a heap reluctant to trot out peac'ble—an' if they come a-r'arin', you fellers can take a hand."

"*Si, señor!*"

Juan then spoke rapidly, as if to many men; there was a trampling and scrape of feet, confused, but to alert imaginations it sounded like the movement of many feet.

"I thought," said Windy Mills, "as how you wasn't goin' throw a bluff like this here 'less you was backed up plumb plenty!"

"As a jedge o' char'cter, Windy, you are expert. Now le's see you all wiggle yore legs—all you!"

There was a new snap of command in Buck's voice, and he stepped well to one side of the doorway, tossed cigaret and match stick away, rested his knuckles against his hips and waited.

The men, relieved a little by the feeling that they were out-numbered and were not knuckling down merely to one man, began to crawl out from between benches and table, moving slowly, sulkily.

"Into the bunk room there an' get yore things—an' only what's yourn. If this ranch house had legs, I reckon you'd a-been runnin' it over the back trail too, like you was wishin' of the waterholes. Yeah!"

They went with shambling gait out of the door, and in the shadows of the porch they crossed to the bunk room; and they could see two figures waiting in the shadows as

if with menace, and these were enough to make them feel that other men were scattered about the house in the darkness.

In the bunk room they lighted the smoky lamp and two or three candles, then pawed about their belongings, taking clothing razors, odds and ends of trinkets, which were stuffed into little bundles or saddle bags.

One man began to fold up blankets.

"No blankets!" Buck told him.

"These here are mine!"

"They 's some cows too that are mine, you 've drove off. Bring home my cows you get yore blankets. An' I reckon I c'n trust you fellers not to ride off on no Eighty-Eight hosses—or if you do, to send 'em back, prompt. Yeah. Now light out down to the corral, an' if you want to be obligin' you'll shore get off this ranch in one —— of a hurry. An' if anybody f'r *any* reason comes moseyin' back up here tonight, he'll shore get mistook for a coyote. Be a travelin' —what's that you're sayin' Red?"

Red had not been saying anything; but he took the hint and spoke up on the instant—

"You goin' let danged cow-thiefs walk offen yore ranch without hangin' 'em first!"

"Red, to try to hang all the cow thiefs in this here country would be plumb depopulatin'. I'm treatin' of 'em gentle in the hopes they'll get repentent. Yeah."

The men filed out, awkwardly, glancing with lowered eyes toward Red and Juan, trying in the deep shadows to see what they looked like, glancing into deeper shadows, imagining the outline of men there.

"An' remember," Buck called as they were marching off in a straggling file, "don't ary one o' you come back up this way a-tall. We'll take it plumb onfriendly."

Red demanded—

"Are you lettin' them danged thiefs ride offen yore ranch on ary hoss they can catch?"

"Red, you are plumb c'rrect. Ary hoss them fellers can catch tonight or tomorrer, they're welcome to ride 'im. My 'pinion is them *hombres* 'll be mighty compromisin' in the mornin'. They'll be plumb eager for to relate where they've got my cows drove to. They showed so much injun-uity—I reckon that there word comes from the way Injuns act—in keepin' the cook an' them women from departin' that I adopted the which for my benefit, personal. No cowboy he ain't a-goin' light out to walk in them high-heeled boots more'n a mile or two, an' bare-foot he ain't a-goin' walk a-tall. It'll get cold along toward mornin' —the which was why I barred blankets speciul. An' when they start a fire I'm goin' to ask 'em to kick 'er out. You'll see."

IV

BUCK, Juan and Red seated themselves against the house, facing the corral, to watch and listen. They had not the least feeling that any of these men would try to sneak back to the ranch house, but as Red remarked—

"It ain't ever' night yuh can git so much free entertain' for nothin'!"

They could not see the men at that distance, and at first heard nothing but the occasional echo-like tones of voices, the thump of saddles, lifted and dropped, now and then a clattering stumble through the still darkness.

"Hey—"a voice rose clear, puzzled, and petulant—"they ain't no hoss in this —— corral."

"Yore crazy," some one of his friends called to him. "He's layin' down some-'eres agin the fence!"

"He's layin —— small then. I walked plumb around 'er. They ain't no hoss here—but the gate it is closed!"

"Then the hoss is there. Yore blin'!"

Other men entered the corral and walked about, stumbling, peering at any deep shadow, hopeful that the horse might be lying there.

"Well that's —— funny."

"Ain't it," some one jeered angrily. "Funny as ——."

"What we goin' do?"

They drew together to talk it over; then presently Windy Mills climbed to the top of the corral fence and shouted:

"Hey up there to the house! Hey!"

"Speak up," said Buck, nudging Red.

"What yuh want?" Red bawled.

"They ain't no hoss here—no hoss to run 'em in from the pasture!" Windy yelled at the top of his voice.

"Ain't they?" Red answered.

"No they ain't!"

"Well," Red demanded, "what yuh yellin' at me that away for? I ain't stole yore hoss. All the hoss thiefs are down

there in yore bunch—search them fellers' pockets!"

It then sounded vaguely as though Windy was talking blasphemously to himself; but after a time he shouted again—

"Hey up there!"

"Yeah, *now*, what is it?" Red answered.

"What we goin' do 'bout no hoss?"

"Hosses out in the pasture—lots of 'em. Feed 'em some sugar— 'r put salt on their tails!"

Windy swore loudly and got down off the fence.

It was about an hour later, and the air had begun to feel cool, when the watchers by the side of the house saw a small flame start up from the ground, and heard the breaking of sticks as men gathered wood.

Buck picked up his Winchester. Against the flame he drew a bead as well as he could, and shot. The shot scattered embers, and the shadowy forms about the fire leaped aside. Protesting "heys" went up, and angry "what the ——'s the matter with you!"

"Kick out that fire!" Buck shouted. "Think I want my corrals an' buildin's all burnt up. Kick 'er out!"

"It's cold!" some one yelled.

"Walk round!" Buck bawled. "Jump up an' down—that'll keep yuh warm!"

Nothing more was shouted, but Buck could hear the men cursing as they scattered the fire with their boots.

TO BE CONTINUED

OCEAN'S GREATEST MYSTERY

by Patrick Vaux

IT IS not the affair of the *Marie Celeste*, which took place a little more than fifty years ago—baffling and intriguing as it is, nor is it the lesser-known mystery, but equally insoluble, of the American schooner, *J. Hopkins*, bound from Savannah for St. Thomas. Three weeks after setting sail the *J. Hopkins* was picked up lying aground on the southeast spur of Horse-Shoe Reef, Anegada Island, in the British Virgin Islands group. All sail was set, and the cookhouse fire was burning, a potful of pork and beans having simmered almost dry. As with the *Marie Celeste*, everything was in order on board; the cargo and hatches were in place and all taut; and on the skipper's table a watch lay ticking and there was a half-emptied tumblerful of rum and water dashed with lime-juice. But—

One of her boats were missing, and in the deck, hard by the wheel, there was sticking a bloodstained jack-knife. As to the doom of her crew nothing is known. Like the *Marie Celeste*, she was well-found and seaworthy and, like her, this schooner was found not long after having been deserted, with the sea as smooth as a millpond.

Some may opine that the case of the *Triton*, reported from the West Indies some years before the war, exceeds in mystery both of the instances already mentioned; and certainly there is in it the additional element of startled dumb life. The irrefutable witness of the Something, mysterious and appalling, that had taken place.

It was an N. L. liner for Curacoa which sighted the English steamer and, marking she was not under control, sent a boat across to her. The vessel seemed to have been abandoned in the utmost hurry. Boiler fires were not quite dead and steam had been shut off. Evidently great haste had been made, as a spanner was yet in place on a nut and other tools lay strewn about on the engine-room grating. In the caboose stood the untouched breakfasts for the forecastle and the officers' messroom. Between the pages of the log, lying outspread on the desk in the charthouse, was a penholder, as if newly put down, and parallels lay on the chart. Everything was in its place except that in the forecastle, both in the deckhands' and the firemens' quarters, blankets and clothing lay tossed around, and in the mate's berth a revolver appeared as if pulled out beneath the pillow. One lifeboat was gone, and on the port side another bobbed alongside, still hooked on the falls.

But there was a dog on board the *Triton*—a Newfoundland—and particular note was taken that it was almost mad with fright. The animal, when left to itself, slunk and

scurried about the deck as if chevied by tormenting fiends. What had become of the *Triton's* crew and why the Newfoundland was driven eldritch crazy, have not been solved. In this instance of ocean mystery occurs the suggestion of the dreadful, of the awful unknown, having suddenly materialized in some form or other.

Somewhat the same atmosphere surrounds the derelict which a French cargo steamer, *L'Aigle*, picked up east of Formosa late last century. She was a large Chinese junk, with all her mat sails set. Not a person was on board. There were no traces of bloodshed, or disorder, or of sudden flight. She was perfectly seaworthy, carried abundance of stores and water, and the valuable cargo of silks and other merchandise was intact. Forward there lay on the deck a little bronze image of Buddah and a curiously carved green jade. Her crew had simply vanished, leaving all their worldly possessions behind them.

It is hard to say which of those four ocean mysteries is the most intriguing. They are puzzling and fascinating, but none of them can fire the imagination and create drama—the drama of real life, not of fiction. They are mere movie-shows, as it were, when put alongside the very little known case of an American brig, boarded some years ago by a French vessel in the South Atlantic, north some three leagues of Fernando Noronha Island. Her name, the port she had sailed from, her business on Atlantic waters, her officers and her hands—all remain unknown for reasons soon to be stated.

A heavy jobble of sea was running when she was sighted, yawing wildly, with her canvas flying, and the *Mercure*, seeing she was in distress, sent a boat over to investigate.

She was a black brig, with a round stern, a white quarter-rail and rakish masts, the lower masts painted white. The general cut of her told of her nationality and it was reckoned she was an oldish craft. Now she was kept full, now she fell off her course with flapping sails and sometimes, slewing round, head on to the rising wind, she was taken all aback. Jigging and reeling about, the brig led the boat a chase, and it was noted that no one appeared to be on board save a crouching figure in the foretop. Just as she was again almost running the small craft down, the latter succeeded in pulling under her stern. No line being thrown in answer to the hail, the seaman in the bows of the boat hooked on, and the craft was made fast. As her crew scrambled aboard it was seen that a white band running round the hull above the waterline had, like the vessel's name, been very recently painted over with tar.

While a hand was sent to the wheel and the brig steadied, the others went over her. The only living thing aboard was the figure in the foretop—a big ape, that showed his teeth savagely, and, jabbering as if frightened out of its wits at sight of human beings again, slipped away through the lubber-hole. Both the deck-houses were found to be empty and in great disorder. The bunks had been stripped, and the straw mattresses removed. A pair of seaboots, a sea-chest, empty, and with its lid smashed in, a black cutty-pipe, and a litter of rubbish were all that could be seen there.

In the cook-house stood a potful of burned rice and a pannikin of rum and coffee lay on the stove, the smaller copper of which was half full of pea-doo. The main hatchway was open; the combings and part of the deck around were much charred; and the cargo directly beneath had also been burned. On the fatty black ash lying on the top there having been cleared away, charred hides and cases strapped with metal bands were come upon.

The wind freshening, sail was taken off the brig and, while this was being done, the ape swung himself from rope to rope, seeking to escape the neighborhood of men. As was afterward stated, the blending of fear and ferocity in his eyes was something horrible to witness. By his attitude, the simian gave more than a hint as to the mystery of what had taken place below.

The deck itself told a little of the drama which has been enacted. From the after-cabin hatchway to away forward by the fore-bits was a trail of brown-red splashes and spots, plainly of dried-up blood, with here and there alongside it the stamp of a gory left foot, most evidently naked and lacking the great toe and its neighbor. Bullet marks pitted the starboard bulwarks and also that side of the after deck-house.

A seaman's greasy knife-sheath was picked up, and a lady's watch which some one's heavy boot-heel had trodden upon, together with a half-burned envelope the

address on which had been charred away. Many scraps of burned paper eddied about along the foot of the lee bulwarks. Hard by, where the longboat had been secured, the block and tackle getting her overboard still dangling overhead, lay a great heap of biscuit crumbs, with footmarks in it. All the water butts had been started, and a small and beautifully built galley, embellished with much gilt scroll work and spotless white paint had been wrecked with axe and saw and sledge-hammer.

The mystery and confusion on deck were repeated a thousandfold in the after cabin. It had been sacked and looted. All the lockers and boxes had been forced open.

In one corner, a cane-bottomed easy-chair lay overturned, with a delicate white forefinger, distinctly a woman's, clinging blood-glued, to a rail of the carved back. Among the jumble of disordered and broken furniture on the floor were a pair of ladies' dressing-slippers, torn underclothes and a gory belaying-pin to which was sticking a wisp of gray hair. In another corner the body of a man was huddled—a short, spare man, with gray hair and a yellow goatee beard. He was clad in shirt and trousers. The upper part of his head was frightfully battered, and his clothing was stiff with the blood that had gushed and dribbled and clotted from the stabs and shot-wounds with which he was riddled.

The flesh on the back of his hands was slashed with cuts. But, clenched in his right fist, was a strip of frayed blue jersey.

Nothing could be discovered giving the slightest clue. As already stated, the brig's name had been blocked out with tar, her quarter-boards wrenched off, and all her boats except the damaged galley were gone. Apparently the log and ship's papers had been pitched into the flames. One thing, however, was picked up, and possibly, it sheds some light on the mysterious tragedy. It was a photograph, found in the captain's sleeping-berth—the portrait of an exceedingly lovely young woman, nursing a baby with, leaning over the back of her chair, a short, spare, goatee-bearded gray-headed, officer looking down at her.

Heavy weather coming up quickly, the *Mercures* boat was urgently recalled. The bloodstained floating hearse slanting away to leeward, disappeared astern, her murdered captain lying stiff in his cabin, with the ape in the rigging as sole mourner.

Is there another ocean mystery which can surpass this which overtook the unknown American brig? A prolonged spell of storm setting in, she, without a doubt, and the boats that had put off from her, must have met the doom decreed by winds and waves.

Ships of mystery are to be found in no particular one of the Seven Seas. All the oceans have furnished instances of them; and the lesser stretches of water as well. In the Barentz Sea, south of Spitzbergen, a whaler, the *Narwhal*, out of Peterhead, Scotland, in 1861, sighted an odd looking derelict, with running gear and standing rigging flying loose and broken, canvas in shreds and tatters and hull battered and weatherworn. It was noticed her boats were gone. When she was boarded it at once was seen she had been built early in the 19th century, and had been icebound for years; ice and frozen snow encumbered her deck and hatchways.

In her after cabin there lay on the floor the body of a young and beautiful woman perfectly preserved by the Arctic frosts. Sitting by her, and not far from the ashes of the long-dead fire, was the corpse of a young man, still holding in its hands the flint and steel, which it appeared to be striking. In a cabin off the cuddy was another body, embalmed by the frigid North. The man was sitting in a chair, and leaning back in a most natural posture, as if he was listening. No clues were obtained in explanation of the mystery connected with her, although *Karolus Rex* cut deep with carpenter's chisel on the lintel of her gloomy forecastle indicated her nationality had been Swedish. Clark Russell made use of the *Karolus Rex* in one of his best novels of the sea.

Solace of the Sea

by Bill Adams

Author of "The Helmsman of the Mandarin," *"Old Sea Flower," etc.*

WHEN the mate discovered him toward eight bells of the first watch, on the second morning at sea, the ship was already six hundred miles off shore. She was under full sail, with a fresh breeze on her quarter. The decks had been scrubbed down, and the port watch were busy swabbing the paintwork when the mate went down to the sail-locker. He was an elderly, stoop-shouldered man with a scanty gray mustache, round smooth-shaven chin and a pair of windy looking pale blue eyes.

In the indistinct light of the sail-locker he caught sight of the top of a man's head above the far roll of canvas.

"What are you doing there?" he asked. His tone was careless; but his next words determined.

"You'd better come out of it!"

A bare head covered with a shock of thick brown hair rose from behind the sails. A large pale face appeared. Two lustrous dark eyes met the steady gaze of the mate. Then, as a pair of immense shoulders lifted, the unarmed mate stepped back.

"You'll have to come out of it, my man. You may as well come," he said.

Two enormous hands grasped the rim of the canvas. A small clubbed foot, a deformed and twisted leg, swung slowly over the sail. Steadying himself with difficulty against the roll of the ship, the stowaway stood up and faced the mate. Beneath his ragged jacket was nothing but a thin and buttonless undershirt, through the opening of which great ribs were visible under a cold white skin. A pair of tattered trousers, evidently made for a much larger man, sagged on his feeble legs.

"Come aft to the skipper," said the mate, and preceded by him, clinging to sails and to stanchions, the stowaway crept to the ladder foot and up to the open deck. Holding to the belaying pins and ropes at the topgallant rail, he hobbled aft, while the five sailors of the watch looked up from their swabbing and followed him with astonished eyes.

The mate led the cripple to the poop, and putting his head in at the chart-room door called to the skipper in the saloon below,

"A stowaway, sir!"

"Set him to work," replied the skipper.

The mate turned and looked at the stowaway for a minute, then, bending in at the door again, called—

"Maybe you'd better come up, sir."

The skipper ascended the companion-ladder and stepped to the chart-room door. As his eyes fell upon the stowaway the scowl in his face was replaced by a look of blank surprize.

"What are you doing here?" he asked,

his tone, though impatient, not unkindly.

For a moment they gazed into each other's faces; the skipper's face bearded and weather-browned, lined and perplexed; that of the silent stowaway pale, lean almost to the point of emaciation, and covered with a soft curly down that had never known razor. Turning to the mate, whose face was as puzzled as his own, the skipper said—

"You can find something for him to do, Mister."

Eight bells went. Passing the chart-room, the relieved helmsman paused to give the mate the course; then, about to hurry off to the forecastle, was called back.

"This man'll have to live in the focsle. Take him along," said the mate.

The sailor replied:

"Aye, aye, sir. There's a spare bunk;" and took charge of the stowaway.

The second mate came from his room, and the mate, on his way to breakfast, stayed to speak with him of the day's work.

"There's a stowaway. He was in the sail-locker. He'll be in my watch," said the mate as they parted.

The second grunted contemptuously, and went forward to set his men to their work. He was a tall black-haired, black-browed man; thin-lipped, with large ears that clung close to his narrow head. His nose, his wrists and fingers were long and bony; his deep-set greenish eyes, cold and unfriendly.

The stowaway and man from the wheel were come to the forecastle.

"There's your bunk, shipmate," said the sailor, pointing to a bunk empty but for an old straw mattress. The other five men of the watch entered; one of them carrying a hash-kid. They gathered about the stowaway who, seated with his little legs hidden in a corner where oilskins and sea-boots hung, looked a bigger man than any of them.

"You 'aven't got nothing, 'ave you, shipmate?" asked one, his eyes on the cripple's ragged jacket; and looking up into his questioner's face the shivering cripple answered—

"No, sir."

The sailor winked to his comrades.

"Don't 'sir' me, Johnnie. I ain't no dog," he said, and a quick flush overspread the stowaway's pale face.

"That's all right, shipmate," said the sailor. "We ain't none of us but focsle Jacks here." Turning to the others, he asked—

"Who's got that what he don't want?"

"Let's eat," said another. "We'll fix up Johnnie when we've ate."

One of them brought an old tin plate and dented pannikin from the locker, and saying, "Remember Johnnie," handed them to the stowaway while the others portioned out their meal. When they were served, he helped himself; then passed the hash-kid to the cripple in the corner.

"You give me more than you keep," said the stowaway.

"Don't never say 'no' to no grub at sea," called one.

"Eat hearty. Fill up, shipmate," cried another.

Restraining his eagerness, the stowaway ate slowly, and was still eating when the man who had brought him to the forecastle asked—

"What about some dunnage for Johnnie, now?"

They poked about in their sea-chests and bunks. One tossed a blanket to the empty bunk, another a shirt, another a suit of old dungarees, another a pair of heavy socks. When one threw a pillow to the head of the empty bunk, the stowaway said—

"You've got no pillow, sir."

"Sir, yourself," retorted the sailor, "I don't use no pillow."

They rolled into their bunks and bade him do likewise, and while they fell into their easy accustomed sleep, he lay staring at the bottom of the bunk above him. His shoulders almost filled the narrow space. At his feet, which were far from the end of the bunk, lay the pile of clothing that they had given him. It was the middle of the morning when he fell asleep. When the men turned out at the striking of the bell at noon he was still sleeping.

"Leave him be," said one, and another—

"Aye, leave him doss it."

The mate looked in, saw him asleep, and said—

"Leave him be."

When he awoke they were gone to the deck, of which, for a little while longer until the mate relieved him, the second mate was yet in charge. The stowaway could hear the other watch at their dinner in the opposite side of the two-roomed forecastle.

The second mate appeared in the doorway.

"Get out! What are ye loafing here for?"

he demanded, and added, "Ye're no blasted good on a ship."

The stowaway hobbled out to the deck, the dinner that his comrades had set aside for him untouched. A man of the mate's watch scowled at the second from behind his back. The mate came round the corner of the forecastle and, leaving him in charge, the second hurried aft to his dinner.

"How did you come to stow away?" asked the mate, and clinging to the hand-rail of the forecastle, the cripple made no answer.

"Go get some rope yarns," called the mate to one of his men. "Show this man how to make robands."

While the sailor went for rope yarns the stowaway sat on the hatch and looked beyond the dipping bulwark to the rolling sea. Wide ocean spaces shone in sunlight. Wide sea fields lay in shadow. Clouds passed over the mastheads. The mainsail arched above him. As if in them were desire for things he might not reach, his powerful fingers twitched.

The sailor came and sat beside him, a length of old rope on his hand.

"This way, Johnnie," he said, drawing the yarns from the rope, explained the making of robands. Pointing to the yard above, he told their purpose, showing the cripple how they held the mainsail to its jackstay.

THE stowaway took the yarns and began to make robands. From time to time through the afternoon watch sailors passed and paused to watch him. When one of them said, "You're a sailor, ain't you, Johnnie?" his eyes shone.

One of the men looked into the forecastle and saw the untouched plate of food. Coming to the roband maker on the hatch, he asked—

"Ain't you hungry?"

The cripple made no answer, and seeing the dull shadow in his eyes, the sailor moved off to where his fellows worked. They looked at the open port of the second mate's room, beneath the break of the poop, and muttered to each other. One fetched a biscuit from the forecastle, and thrust it into the hand of the roband maker.

"Nibble on that," he said. "It'll keep you going till eight bells."

The stowaway crunched the hard sea-biscuit eagerly. When eight bells went, four of the afternoon and the beginning of the dog-watch, one of them gathered up his robands.

"Go eat," he said, "I'll put 'em away for you."

While the mate's watch sat smoking and talking in the forecastle, waiting for supper time at half past five, the stowaway ate the dinner that he had missed. When one of the starboard watch looked in and saw the cripple for the first time, his exclamation of surprize was stopped by a gesture from a sailor near the door, who, beckoning him downward, whispered—

"He ain't got no legs."

At an angry shout from the second mate the idling questioner moved off. Three bells went. They fetched their supper from the galley and refilled the stowaway's plate before they served themselves. At four bells the starboard watch came below and, when they had eaten their supper, joined their comrades of the port-watch. The dog-watch time their own, they talked of ships and seaports; no one asking the stowaway whence or why he came.

When at eight bells all hands walked aft to the quarterdeck, for the muster of the watches, the cripple hobbled with them. Garbed in the clothes that they had given him, he clung to the fife-rail and listened while the mate called their names over; his form, as all other forms, invisible in the darkness. Muster over, they walked forward again, the cripple lagging behind; the second mate's watch to keep the deck till midnight, the mate's to hurry to their four-hour sleep.

Going down the poop-ladder on the way to his room, the mate called one of his men back.

"The stowaway may as well sleep all night," he said. "He's no use on deck."

"The mate says for you to sleep all night," said the sailor when he came forward, and the cripple, his face turned from the glimmer of the forecastle lamp, was silent. When the watch were asleep he rose from his bunk and, seated on the door coaming, looked out to the night. Stars swung about the mastheads. The bow wash sang. Blocks creaked, and the reef points pattered on the topsails. He sat there a long while, hidden in the darkness. When he returned to his bunk he buried his face in his pillow, and by and by fell into deep sleep.

When he awakened there was a light in

the forecastle. His comrades were hastily dressing for the middle watch.

"Sleep, shipmate," said one.

"Lie down and doss it out till morning," said another.

Eight bells struck. They went out to muster on the quarterdeck again, and he crept from his bunk and followed. But before he reached the quarterdeck, muster was over. Unseen by the sailors as they passed him, he clung to the rail, and when they were all gone by, sat on the hatch; whence he saw the red sparks of their pipes, and heard their voices faintly.

An hour passed. The mate came down from the poop and walked forward, making a round of the decks. Unaware of the cripple, he passed close by the hatch and strolled on to speak a word with the lookout man on the forecastle head, and to take a look at the set of the headsails. Returning from his round, he paused by the hatch and struck a match to light his pipe. By the match flare he saw the stowaway's white face.

"I told them to tell you that you could sleep all night," he said, "didn't they tell you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the stowaway.

The match went out. The darkness was absolute. For a moment the mate stood with his unlighted pipe in his fingers. Then he walked to where the sailors paced the fore-deck.

"Let the stowaway take the next lookout," he said. "He can keep lookout with the rest of you."

The bells clanged another hour away, and the stowaway, hearing the sailors calling him, rose and hobbled forward. The forecastle lamp was lighted, and surprized to see his bunk empty, they were wondering what was become of him.

"It's your lookout, Johnnie," they told him. "The mate says for you to take lookout the same as the rest of us."

His face shining, his great eyes luminous, he turned to hurry up to the forecastle head, while the sailors looked from one to another.

"He must 'a' gone an' asked the mate to let him keep lookout," they said.

"There's no need of you tramping up and down," said the lookout man whom he relieved. "Sit on the skylight, son." He left the cripple seated on the skylight, with the wind from the foresail blowing in his hair. The ship lay down to the wind. Phosphorescent water glowed at her sides. A spray spattered over him. His face shone, wet and eerie, in the green sea light. The wind was freshening.

An hour passed. The mate's whistle shrilled. From the darkness of the deck below a halyard-block rattled. Sailors were running. A sail flapped high up, where stars reeled dizzily. A light gleamed in the starboard forecastle, where one of the mate's men were rousing out the other watch to help with shortening sail. Dim shapes appeared in the dim rigging. The cripple's great fingers twitched as he watched them climb.

The stars went out. The sea lights died. Wind beat upon him and the sprays drenched by.

At a shriek from high on the mainmast he started and half rose. Men who shouted words that he could not hear were hurrying down the rigging. Then came long silence, and presently a light in the forecastle again, with a murmur as of many men talking.

Eight bells crashed out upon the iron bell behind him and, relieved by one of the other watch, he made his awkward way down the ladder and into the forecastle. His comrades were undressing in gloomy silence.

One of the second mate's watch entered and sat down a moment. His face was haggard. When he was gone, a sailor of the mate's watch asked—

"Johnnie, didn't you know?"

"Know what?" he asked.

"One o' the starboard watch lost overboard. Turn out the glim before you roll in, shipmate."

He turned out the light; then sat for a long time upon the door coaming, and looked and listened to the night without.

Morning broke over a windy sea. While the watch labored at halyards and braces, he sat beneath the forecastle-head and made robands. When dusk was drawing in that evening the mate came to him, with the second at his heels.

"You'll be in the second mate's watch now," said the mate. "He's short a man."

While the mate went aft, the second looked down at the stowaway.

"A kid can make them things," he said derisively, and after watching the silent cripple awhile followed the mate.

When he was gone, the stowaway let fall an unfinished roband and sat hunched upon the sail-locker hatch, his chin in his huge

hands. He sat there still after the dog-watch bell had struck, and did not move till one of the second mate's watch came calling:

"Come on, Johnnie. You're one of us now. It's time to eat."

THE starboard watch filled a plate and pannikin for him. When his old comrades of the port-watch came, carrying his clothes, one of them asked—

"Was that the best they could do for you, Johnnie?"

"He can have Lanky's duds," said another, "Lanky'd be glad for him to have 'em."

And when they had finished their supper they opened up their sea-chests and brought out the drowned man's clothes that they had portioned out amongst themselves. The second mate looked in.

"That fellow can take a full four-hour lookout," he said, "it's all he's good for."

When he was gone there was silence in the forecastle, some of the men looking sullenly after him.

At eight bells the stowaway went up to take lookout till midnight, instead of for the customary two hours. The wind was fallen away. He sat on the skylight and gazed into the darkness ahead.

At a sharp voice behind him he scrambled to his feet.

"That's no way to keep lookout! Stand up and keep your eyes peeled."

For the rest of the four hours he clung to the forecastle-rail, while steep swells rolled under the ship, tossing her jerkily. When he cried, "All's well, sir," at midnight, the second mate replied with a gruff "all right."

Lying awake in his bunk, weary, but too tremulous for sleep, he listened to the footsteps of the other watch. Now and again a few words came to him.

"He didn't ought to have stowed away," said a voice from the darkness.

"You ain't no use when you're in his fix," another answered.

His fingers clasping and unclasping, he buried his face in his pillow.

In the morning he watched a sailor go aloft and loose the foresail, and saw them sheet it home. He was warmly clad now. A hint of color was come to his cheeks. His face was fuller. But his eyes looked dead, and his fingers, weaving robands, wove mechanically.

Low clouds hung over a gray sea all day. Almost becalmed upon the high, unbroken swell, the ship rolled heavily, her gear clacking, and the long slap of the wash monotonous around her. At nightfall a sound of far-off moaning rose, insistent, ominous.

A sailor of the mate's watch, walking the deck unseen, spoke to an unseen comrade.

"It'll blow up before the watch is done."

He had but spoken when the stowaway, seated on the door coaming, heard the mate's whistle. The sailors ran. Sheaves rattled and ropes, flung from their pins, thudded on the deck. A quick breeze stirred his hair, and was instantly gone. The sails flapped, filling suddenly, and fell again. A light appeared in the chart-house. He heard the skipper shout—

"All hands shorten sail!"

A sailor rushed into the forecastle, brushing against him so that he staggered and fell back, and falling, bumped his head on a sea-chest. As he clambered to his feet, men were leaping from their bunks and springing to the deck without staying to dress. There was a roar of wind. Rain hissed, a torrent. The lamp, lighted by the sailor who had roused the watch, sputtered and went out.

The stowaway stepped to the deck and the mate recognizing him as he bumped into him, cried—

"Stay in the focsle! Keep off the deck!"

A sea rolled over the bulwarks and, crashing upon the door, slammed it to after him. He sat on a sea-chest in utter darkness, the water that had lapped over the coaming swirling about his feet. Outside, the wind roared. The sea thundered.

Hours passed. Dawn came through the port above him, and he rose to open it and look out. The sea was white; the air above it a white flying mist. Above the mist, white clouds drove, woolly and unbroken. No human voice came to him. A surge of water gushed through the port. He shut the port. The ship was trembling; the forecastle groaning as the seas smashed over it. Oilskins and sea-boots that hung upon the bulkhead swung to and fro. Plates and pannikins clattered in the locker.

The men of both watches clung to a life line on the poop, the mate beside them, and the skipper near. Beaten by wind and spray, threshed by the driven rain, their heads were bowed. In a corner between the mizzenmast and the forward end of the chart-room was the second mate; he, alone

of all, in some degree protected from the weather.

Unseen by those upon the poop, a head appeared in the smother of the maindeck below. Breathless and aghast, afraid to stay longer alone in his galley, the cook was fighting his way toward the poop-ladder.

The ship lurched to windward and lay for a breath upon an even keel; then, as a comber roared, flooding her decks bulwark high, she staggered away to lee. When her decks were half clear again, the cook was gone.

The skipper raised his head and looked on and beyond the swamped quarterdeck. Grasping the mate by the arm, he pointed to the galley. Its door stove in, its bulkhead twisted, the galley was moving bodily. While they watched, it was lifted by a boarding sea, picked up, and carried over the bulwark as if it had been but an empty biscuit tank.

Skipper and mate looked to the forecastle, and from the forecastle to each other. His words lost in the blast of the hurricane, the skipper's gesture was understood, and the mate let go the life-line and made for the mizzenmast. Slipping upon the flowing deck, pounded by the merciless wind, he fell; but was instantly upon his feet again. Clutching a rope's end, blood flowing from a cut on his forehead, he was hurled against the mizzenmast. There, one hand firm on a belaying pin, one to his lips, he yelled to the second mate.

Again and again he yelled, and all the time the other, feet braced and footing secure, stared down into his face; as if uncomprehending what it was that he would say. But when the mate left him and battled his way back to the sailors at the life-line, he turned a scowling glance toward the forecastle.

Pointing to the forecastle, the mate yelled into a sailor's ear and the sailor, nodding his head understandingly, turned to yell to the man beside him. In another moment the mate and the two sailors stood at the head of the poop-ladder. Preceding the sailors to the quarterdeck, the mate turned back to shout—

"Keep together—only chance!"

Waist deep in the swirling seas at the ladder's foot, they bided their opportunity.

The ship dipped, with a swift dizzy jerk; then, flinging her bows high, while her stern dropped deep to the hollows, tossed tons of green water back upon her rolling deck. When she steadied again, the quarterboat that had been lashed in its chocks upon the skids above the mate and the two sailors was gone—wrenched away and swept to the lee sea.

Bending from the ladder head the skipper yelled—

"Back! Back! Back!"

No one heard him, and while the ship shivered to the approach of another roller, the three were gone into the smother along the maindeck life-line.

Minutes passed. Now and again the top of the forecastle appeared above the seas, to be immediately submerged again.

A half hour was gone. When a head appeared in the smother of the quarterdeck the skipper and crew rushed to and down the ladder and, handing him from one to another, passed one gasping and exhausted sailor to the slight security of the poop. The mate and the other sailor were gone whither the cook was gone.

Day passed. Night came, black replacing white.

When, far in the night, the skipper reached to find the sailor who had stood beside him, he felt only the life-line and, creeping along the line, found but two men, whose shouts were inaudible to him, as were his to them.

HOURS passed.

The stowaway opened the forecastle door. Water washed waist deep on the deck. The rain had ceased. The fallen wind howled mournfully. Her sails all long since split to shreds, the ship rolled her bulwarks under in quick succession. A star winked, and was gone.

The stowaway commenced to make his way aft. With his puny legs swept from under him he proceeded hand over hand along the taut life-line. A sailor, fighting to regain his footing, might have drowned like a rat. But the stowaway had never known legs. When his head was submerged, he held his breath until he rose again; and rising, drew deep breaths lest he again submerge. So, reliant on his great arms alone, he came at last to the poop-ladder. A few scattered and windy stars gleamed as he ascended. The sea was invisible, the ship invisible as, expecting at every moment to feel the forms of his comrades, he crept

along the poop life-line. He found no one.

Drenched, weary from a sleepless night, worn by his struggle along the watery deck, he collapsed upon the poop and, one arm tightly locked about a taffrail stanchion, drooped his head, and so presently fell asleep.

Hours passed. Dawn broke. The wind was fallen to an air. Naked and crippled, the ship rolled in the troughs of a blue-gray sea on which were no white-caps. Her main and mizzenmasts were gone, snapped off at the deck, and carried away with all their gear. The fore topmast and all its yards gone, only the fore lowermast stood; with the fore yard braced square, the foresail still secure and unharmed in its gaskets. The chart-house and forecastle were intact. On the top of the forecastle was the gig, its cover blown away, but its lashings undamaged. The wheel kicked to the roll.

The stowaway awoke and looked across the long blue swells and on decks, dry but for the water that bubbled in through the scupper holes. In a few minutes he rose and made his way down to the quarterdeck. Under the poop-ladder, prevented from shutting by a mattress jammed on the coaming, the door of the cabin alleyway swung to and fro. He pushed the mattress in and shut the door; then, his hands on the ladder-rail, he gazed forward.

On the bed in the skipper's cabin lay a tall black-haired, thin-featured man. Starting from a doze, he rose on an elbow and, after listening awhile, sat up. When he would have swung his legs from the bed he groaned, and fell back to lie outstretched again. Presently, at a sound on the poop above, he crept from the bed and, hopping on one foot, came to and opened the door into the saloon. Water swirled to and fro, ankle deep, in the saloon. His face distorted with pain, he stood listening awhile; then cautiously approached the foot of the companionway up to the chart-room. At the top of the companion he sat down, and his face turned expectantly toward the open door, nursed his injured foot. Seeing no one, he called, first the mate, then the skipper and, hearing no reply, crept on all fours out to the poop-deck. At sight of the storm-raped decks, of the abrupt stump of the mizzenmast, he paled. Shuddering, seated with his back to the chart-room, he nursed his foot and moaned.

The stowaway reopened the alleyway door and passed within. The doors of the mate's and second mate's rooms stood open, with blankets and pieces of clothing caught on their coamings. He hobbled past the two doors, opened the door at the after end of the alleyway and entered the saloon. Finding no one in the skipper's room or steward's pantry, he swung himself slowly up the steep companionway. At the moment that he stepped out to the poop the ship rolled deep in a trough, and he dropped upon his hands and knees and so crept about the forward corner of the chart-house.

Face to face, stowaway and second mate stared into each other's faces. Then, groaning and cursing, his sunken green eyes on the cripple, the second mate leaned back and pointed to his ankle.

The stowaway bent over the swollen ankle, but when he would have touched it, the other cursed him and pushed him off. As he turned back toward the chart-room door, the second mate called to him and, cursing him again bade him stay. The cripple paid no heed.

A minute passed, five minutes, ten minutes, the second mate continually shouting to the stowaway who made no answer. When he came back he came with liniment and bandages taken from the locker in the skipper's cabin. While he swathed the bruised ankle, the second mate mumbled and swore, his untrustful eyes on the down-bent broad back beneath them. When the bruise was bound he pulled himself up and, leaning upon the cripple, hopped into the chart-room and lay down on the settee, where in a little while he fell asleep.

His head pillowed on his arm, the stowaway lay down and slept on the planks without the door.

The swell died. The ship grew still. The sea became a mirror.

TOWARD mid-day the second mate sat up, and cautiously tried his bandaged foot upon the deck. He rose and looked down on the sleeper. Without looking at it, he passed the barometer that hung on the bulkhead and, stepping over the stowaway, stared round the blue sea. His eyes rested on the boat that lay upon the forecastle. Without disturbing the sleeper, he passed down to the quarterdeck, entered the cabin alleyway and made his way direct to the steward's pantry. In a few moments he had

satisfied his hunger and was back on the main deck with a box of food beneath his arm. Limping a little, he walked forward, and climbed to the top of the forecastle.

From time to time as he cast off the lashings that held the boat, he turned to look toward the poop, his shifty eyes contemptuous, his thin lips close.

Little airs stirred.

Hours passed. The stowaway awoke and sat up. He looked into the chart-room and along the decks and, seeing no one, rose and hobbled down the companion to the saloon. Finding all the cabins empty, he returned to the chart-room and sat on the door coaming, his chin in his huge hands. Aware at last of hunger, he went below once more and was gone a long time. When he returned to the poop he looked at the forecastle, trying to remember whether he had seen a boat there since the storm; thinking that he had surely seen her, but unable to be certain.

From east to west above him, and far into the northward, stratus clouds covered the evening sky, the invisible sun tinting them with lights of opal and pink, of violet and pale amethyst; so that they also looked like an ocean, and appeared to reflect the lights of the shining sea below. In the low south, sea and sky were darkly empurpled.

The stowaway went slowly forward, and gazed aloft at the furled foresail. A tiny breeze stirred his thick brown hair as, reaching up, he grasped the shrouds and swung himself easily into the rigging. His puny feet upon the rattlins, he turned to gaze round the resplendent and gently ruffled sea and, at sight of a white dot far astern, started. He looked for a long time at the white dot before, laboriously ascending, he came to and crept out upon the foreyard. His feet useless on the foot-rope, his weight supported by his broad chest upon the yard, he cast the gaskets off with eager fingers, and the foresail fell rustling, to hang motionless, or to lift a little when faint airs passed. He descended and, having made fast the sheets, hastened aft and back up to the poop, whence, from beside the wheel, he looked up to the darkening wastes of the cloud sea. Opal and pink, violet and amethyst, were gone. The sky was become somber, only a thin ribbon of crimson aflame in the low far west. The crimson died. For a moment the west was gold.

Gloom shrouded sea and sky. The south was black.

His eyes were luminous, his great fingers reposeful upon the wheel spokes.

A moan came over the water, and he turned to look to the south, and at the white dot far astern.

Indistinct in the fast deepening gloom, the second mate stood in the boat's bow, gesticulating wildly; his appealing cries unheard, lost, commingled with the murmurous and continually increasing echo of the threatening horizon behind him.

Beneath the horizon of the south there lay a ship, her life-lines taut, her ropes lashed on their pins, her sails snugged down for heavy weather. Their eyes on a low wall of darkness arising from the south, skipper and mate stood by her wheel. In the north the evening sky was tinted with opal and pink, with violet and pale amethyst. Faint airs stirred between phantasmal seas of water and of cloud, sky and ocean each seeming to reflect the other.

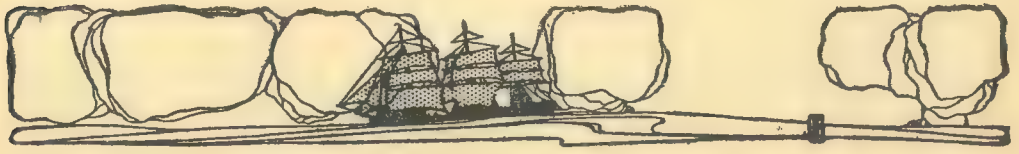
At a cry from a sailor on the forecastle head, skipper and mate turned, while the watches hastened from the forecastle.

Awestruck, all gazed whither the lookout man was gazing.

Now distinct, now faint and fading, now distinct again, a spectral ship was framed amidst the colors of the sunset sky, her inverted decks toward the empty mirror of the alternately ruffled and motionless ocean. Her phantom decks were bare. For a moment her foresail shone, a flake agleam amidst fast gathering shadows.

The sky became somber as the somber sea. The phantom passed. From the south a black wall arose.

The wind roared. The sea thundered.



The Game

by Tom Gill

Author of "White Devil of the Black Hills."

PEDRO, the old Spaniard, told me the tale as we lay between midnight and dawn, waiting for guerilla raiders to cross the Texan line:

It is all a game, *amigo*, a game of life and death. Who plays well wins—at least for a time. But the end is the same always. I am old now and would rather sit and watch while others play, but in the long ago before my blood grew cold—

But listen:

My captain, he was an American like you. He played the game. None better. He loved it, I think, and to him the saints were very kind. He was young and of the West Point and I was his orderly, but he called me friend.

Por Dios, how long ago! It was in California we were stationed, and all around my countrymen lived. Haughty they were and of noble blood, and they hated the gringo, remembering the days when the flag of Spain reigned over the land. Me, too, they hated because my blood was not noble and because I loved my captain who had befriended me.

Not outwardly did they hate us, you understand. Only behind our backs they laughed and sneered. They seldom invited my captain to their *fiestas* and when they did it was safe to guess there was some good reason for their invitation. Bah! They were so condescending it made my blood boil. But my captain only laughed.

The *rancho* of Don Felipe Dominguez lay four miles north of our post, and on the Feast of Santa Teresa he gave a great banquet. Don Felipe was the noblest and proudest of all the *hidalgos*, and big pictures of his ancestors hung on all the walls of the *hacienda*. Men came for miles to the banquets of Dominguez, but only those of old blood or much influence came, or those he had use for. My captain, he was invited as a special courtesy. Besides Dominguez might need us to kill his cattle thieves for him. He was crafty, this old Don, but he hated us like the rest of them.

We rode over, the evening of the banquet, my captain and I. I was a kind of orderly and took care of his horse. All afternoon my captain had lost at the game called poker and his spirits were high.

"Pedro," he said as we cantered along, "some good luck should await us for today I lost my pay of the next two months at cards."

"That is many *pesos*, Captain," I said.

But, my captain laughed and flicked his horse.

"Of what use are they, these *pesos*?"

"To keep one warm when one is very

old," I answered, and he looked at me with his scornful smile.

"Then let us pray the saints for eternal youth," he laughed. "You are an old woman yourself, Pedro."

Then silence came, and I fell back a little for I thought he was angry. But as we came in sight of the *rancho* of Don Felipe Dominguez, my captain beckoned me to his side.

"Why am I asked to this banquet, Pedro?" he asked.

"That they may mock you behind your back and use you when need comes."

I said this because I had no love for Dominguez. Besides it was true.

My captain looked at his horse's ears and then cut over the mesa.

"We will see, Pedro, we will see."

He spoke slow like that, and I knew then he was ready to play at their game with their own cards.

I held the horses in the courtyard, and Don Felipe welcomed him. He bowed low before my captain, saying:

"Be welcomed to our humble *hacienda, Señor el Capitan.* My house is yours, burn it if you will."

And my captain answered with a bow that was no less stately.

"I shall mark this day as one of great honor, Señor el Don Felipe Dominguez."

This he said with his lips, but his eyes twinkled, so I knew he would play the part as the actors at Los Angeles. Then he bowed low to the men and kissed the hands of their wives, and all the time his eyes twinkled. But as he bent over the hand of the Señorita Isabella, his eyes did not twinkle, for she was the daughter of Dominguez, and to look into her face, *amigo,* was worth the price of a man's soul.

All the country knew her as the most beautiful, and many young *cabelleros* left the *rancho* in those days with heavy hearts because Isabella Dominguez had said no. And men whose hair was gray stopped from their talk and looked after Señorita Isabella as she passed, for sunlight and dreams went with her. And perhaps these gray-haired *hidalgos* caught again for a moment a dream of their own, long laid away and forgotten. She was, how shall I say, since neither my language nor yours, *amigo,* can tell how beautiful she was? But it was not strange that my captain's eyes should grow soft and his voice tremble as he stood looking down at her.

The words my captain spoke I could not hear, but little shades of color passed over her face like clouds at evening, and she went back to the women silently.

Ah! *amigo,* the bright colors fade when one grows old, but that night I saw such things as my father in Spain told of in the long ago. Red lips, white teeth and black hair, youth, beauty and happiness—these things belong to the morning of life. A warm hearth is better when the eyes grow dim and the hand feeble.

The banquet I could not see, for I sat in the courtyard with the servants, but I heard the laughter. After the banquet they danced the old stately dances and then Señorita Isabella, she danced with Don Carlos Brevedo, whose *rancho* lay not far distant.

My captain did not like Don Carlos and Don Carlos did not like my captain. It was easy to tell that. My captain watched their dancing with a little smile, but the hand that rested on his sword was white, so tight he clasped it. Soon after my captain came toward me to get his horse, and Don Carlos was with him. When they spoke I knew it was of the Señorita Isabella.

"Don Felipe Dominguez has done me the honor," said Brevedo, "to promise me his daughter's hand."

He said it with a little sneer, for he had seen the way my captain had looked at Señorita Isabella.

My captain answered:

"You are to be envied above all men. And her heart, I presume, goes with her hand?"

If Don Carlos caught the thrust, he gave no sign. He, too, played the game. Only he answered quietly:

"With Spaniards of the old blood, it is always so. Our women are not yet so civilized that they marry one and love another. Only a few years ago you would have laughed, *Señor el Capitan.* A gringo—pardon, an American, paid court to Isabella Dominguez. He was, of course, dismissed."

"Dismissed by Señor Dominguez?" my captain affected surprize. "But your American was of faint heart. He should only have been interested in the opinions of Señorita Isabella." He mounted and lifted his hat. "Adios, Don Carlos Brevedo. It is my hope that we shall meet again."

Don Carlos bowed.

"I am always at the service of *Señor el Capitan,*" he answered. He was no coward this countryman of mine, but *Dios*, how he hated us.

"Pedro," said my captain as we rode beneath the stars, "it may come to pass that I shall have to kill this Brevedo."

That did not matter to me. Why not kill him? It is the law if a man is in your way, kill him.

Then after a time my captain added—

"And I shall marry the Señorita Isabella."

"I am your servant, Captain," said I. "When that time comes I shall aid you, and I think that you will need my aid."

"Good," laughed my captain. "The time I hope will be soon."

And then one day, *amigo*, on such a day as Our Lady sends only to California, my captain met Señorita Isabella in the valley. I drew up my horse and waited leaving them alone. For I, too, had drunk of the wine of youth. They rode slowly side by side, up and down the valley and sometimes she looked up at him and smiled, but most often her head was bent.

Then at last they rode off toward her father's *rancho*, but only to the outer gate. There my captain left her and came back to me. And always after that day when my captain mounted and said he would not need me, I understood and I, too, was happy because I knew that all went well with him and with a dark-haired señorita.

Time passed, and what woman could help loving my captain? I, his servant, loved him and the old major who came to our post loved him as a son. So the Señorita Isabella came to love him. Señor, they were as two children, playing in the sunshine of a California spring. Then love touched them, these children, and made them man and woman. A new light had come to the eyes of Señorita Isabella and a new happiness. It was as if she had said, "I have given all my heart into the hands of the man I love and I am proud that this should be so."

But one afternoon as I sat outside my captain's tent braiding a *lariata*, two horsemen rode up. They were Carlos Brevedo and Felipe Dominguez. I held their horses to dismount and for thanks Don Felipe cut me with his quirt. He was very angry. So they went into the tent, but I could hear their words.

My captain spoke first.

"Be welcome, gentlemen, your visit is most opportune, Señor Dominguez, I was about to visit your *hacienda* tomorrow. The cigarets are before you."

"*Señor el Capitan*—" it was Dominguez's voice—"I have come to rectify an absurd mistake. I shall be blunt as you Americans are blunt. You have asked my daughter to marry you. Have I spoken correctly?"

"Quite correctly, Don Felipe Dominguez."

"Then you probably did not know that she is already betrothed to Don Carlos."

And then my captain's voice again:

"Señor, there can be no betrothal without love. Your daughter does not love Don Carlos. She loves me. And I, señor, I would gladly die if death were needed to show my love for her. I am not given to pleading with any man, but now I plead for the happiness of Señorita Isabella."

Then came the voice of Dominguez. Like a rasp it was—

"*Señor el Capitan*, when the happiness of my daughter shall depend on the love of a gringo swine, she will cease to be my daughter."

I expected to hear the sound of a swift blow then, but my captain's voice only seemed more gentle.

"For love's sake one bears much. Don Felipe Dominguez," he said, "is it too much to ask that you be fair? Say only that you will let time and your daughter's heart decide, and I shall wait."

Came a short laugh of contempt from Brevedo, and then the voice of Dominguez snarled—

"Enough, I insult the blood in my daughter's veins to speak of her to you. Come not again to the *hacienda*, Yankee Captain, or for my amusement you shall be cast in the dirt by my *peons* and thrown outside the gates. Within a month Isabella will be the wife of Don Carlos."

My captain's voice was still soft, but with a softness that wise men would heed.

"Give thanks to your white hairs now, señor," he said, "that you yourself are not rolling in the dirt. As for Don Carlos, he is nothing more to me than this cigaret which I cast away. I had hoped to marry your daughter with your blessing. That is impossible. Therefore, Don Felipe Dominguez, I shall marry your daughter without your consent, in spite of you, in spite of every man, in spite of —— itself."

It was thus my captain spoke to the noblest of the old Spanish Dons.

Dominguez could not speak. He came outside the tent and the others with him. His face was red all over, but the face of Brevedo was white. I have told you this Brevedo was no coward. He stood before my captain and tried to smile.

"When the Señorita Isabella marries a gringo dog, I shall be dead, señor. In a month, I myself shall marry her and years after our children, her's and mine, shall laugh when I tell them of the American who dared to speak of love to her, yet was too much a coward to fight for her when I insulted him thus."

Then he struck my captain across the face with his sombrero. My hand was on my knife, but I dared not strike. My captain would have been angry for the life of Brevedo belonged to him. My captain did not move but when he spoke it was like the sound of sword on sword.

"When you meet me at sunrise tomorrow on the Mesa Rosa, Señor Brevedo, I pray you bring your revolver and one man. Also do me the courtesy to wear your present costume. The gold braid on your shoulder is so worn, I shall sever it with a bullet."

Then Don Carlos bowed and Don Felipe Dominguez bowed and they rode away.

"I shall not kill him, Pedro," said my captain between his teeth, "but he will not strike men for many days."

But I had already seen through the scheme of Brevedo, for with army men a duel means discharge from the service. If, then, my captain was killed, Brevedo would be rid of him. And if he was not killed, he would be sent way and his sword would be taken and the buttons stripped from his coat. I told these things to my captain, and he nodded and said:

"I know, Pedro, but there are worse things than a dishonorable discharge. To be struck in the face with a sombrero is one of them."

"But if Brevedo should be found dead tomorrow with a knife in his throat, would not the captain feel avenged?"

I said this, but I knew my captain would not consent. It was not his idea of the game. So he smiled and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Keep your knife in its sheath, *amigo mio*, but come with me tomorrow."

He went into the tent to finish his letters, but I sat outside and wished it was Dominguez who was to fight. Was I some *peon* dog to be struck with a quirt?

Next morning before the sun rose I led two saddled horses before my captain's tent. In my own scabbard was a carbine, because one never knows. I bent to hold my captain's stirrup, but he said:

"Wait a little. I promised to cut the braid on Don Carlos's shoulder. It would be a pity to disappoint."

Then he took three small coins and stood them on end in the sand. Thirty paces distant they were when he shot three times, and one could no longer see the coins. Then he mounted.

"Come, Pedro," he said, "it will be interesting."

They were already waiting when we reached the Mesa Rosa, and Don Carlos rode over to us.

"When you cut this braid, *Señor el Capitan*," he said "I pray you cut it here." And he laid his hand over his heart.

"I am desolate not to accommodate you," answered my captain, "but your heart, I think, is the heart of a brave man."

Then Brevedo's lip quivered, and he turned quickly and walked away.

It was agreed that they should stand back to back, then walk ten paces, turn and fire. I sat my horse and the carbine was very loose in its scabbard. It would not be well for Don Carlos Brevedo if he turned before those ten paces had been passed.

Back to back they stood, then at a word they stepped ten times, each holding his revolver. I sat very still and watched Brevedo, and out of the corner of my eye I watched Dominguez. He had struck me, you know.

"Eight, nine, ten," I counted to myself, and Brevedo turned and raised his revolver. I think my captain must have shot from the hip, for I heard his gun crash and saw Brevedo reel as if to fall. His own gun had fallen and his arms hung limp. Then I looked to my captain, and he was walking toward Brevedo. He stooped and, picking up the Don's sombrero, said—

"May I offer a brave man my compliments and his sombrero?"

Brevedo took it in his left hand, saying—

"And accept my apologies for having used it discourteously."

Then he looked at his shoulder where the gold was turning crimson.

"I fear you cut the braid a trifle high to do any damage," he said carelessly.

Then he mounted his horse, his right arm swinging loose. Then he and Dominguez rode away.

I was puzzled because my captain did not kill him—it is not good to spare an enemy in the great game, and we rode home silently. My captain went into his tent and I followed to make up the cot and clean his boots. The white-haired major was inside—he who loved my captain as a son. For a time they talked of many things. Then my captain said slowly—

"I fought a duel this morning, sir."

"——'s fire," said the major.

Then my captain told him all there was to tell. The major sat and puffed a black pipe until the tent was full of smoke. Then he cursed the army and himself and my captain, but mostly he cursed Don Carlos Brevedo.

"Why didn't you put him under arrest instead of shooting him?" he asked.

And my captain only smiled. Between brave men there was no need of answer.

At last the major straightened his shoulders and pushed his white hair back. I knew then what was to come.

"Before men we are soldiers, Captain," he said. "I must ask you for your resignation. Duelling merits a dishonorable discharge."

"I am willing to take what I merit," answered my captain.

"Resignation will do," said the major.

So my captain wrote on the little blue paper that meant he was no longer a soldier. Ah, *por Dios*, no more to hear the clank of scabbard on the stirrup, no more to turn in the saddle and see the sunrise over long columns of riding men, to sniff the bitter smell of powder when the carbines bark. But you, *amigo*, you are a soldier and will understand.

I dropped the boot I was cleaning and crept outside the tent. Then I sat down in the dust and pulled a blanket over my head, for my heart was bleeding and I hated the sunlight, even.

The major came out and threw me a *peso*, but I would not touch it. I said—

"Of what use are *pesos*, major, when one has lost a friend?"

Then the major kicked the *peso* into the road and, stooping down, he shook my hand. Then he swore again and galloped away. But I sat there in the dust, listening to the rustle of paper within the tent as my captain wrote his letters and the scratch of a match as he lit another cigaret.

I could not stand it any longer, so I went inside the tent.

"You are going away, Captain?" I asked.

"Yes, Pedro."

"And you are no longer a soldier?"

"My friend," answered my captain, "a soldier is always a soldier. He can not change. My father lived and died a soldier as I, too, shall live and die. Somewhere in the world there is need of fighting men. I shall go there."

Then I was no longer sad for I thought—

"I shall go with him and be his servant."

The saints are always good, *amigo*, but their ways are strange. I did not know the end. And just as I was about to tell him that I, too, would go, an old servant of Dominguez's crept into the tent. In his hand was a bit of paper and he gave this to my captain.

"Señorita Isabella," he whispered, then ran outside, and I saw him disappear among the chaparral.

My captain read the letter twice before he burned it.

"Pedro," he said, "a woman needs our help. Dominguez has sent his daughter to the convent at Santa Juanita. Her crime, it appears, is that she loves a gringo. You will have the horses ready at sunset."

"Yes, Captain."

I turned to go, and my captain added—

"Three horses, Pedro."

Out in the corral just before sunset I saddled my captain's mare and patted her nose for the last time. My mouth was dry as if it had been filled with dust. They would not need me, my captain and the Señorita Isabella. They were going away and I would stay behind.

As the sun sank, we rode out toward the Aztec trail that leads to Santa Juanita—my captain first, and I followed, leading the other horse. As the twilight deepened the full moon rose over the mesa and I watched it rising, wondering what the end would be. That night I learned wisdom, *amigo*, for it came to me that if one plays the game bravely the end does not matter. The end is always the same.

An hour later we dismounted before the white convent.

"Follow close," whispered my captain. "Dominguez may expect us."

I followed, with revolver drawn, up the little path, but as we mounted the steps I crossed myself, for who were we to force an entrance here?

My captain rapped at the door and soon a gray-haired sister stood before us.

"I have come for the Señorita Isabella," said my captain.

"She can not see you, señor."

"Sister," said my captain softly, "I have come for her."

Inside it was silent like the prairie before daybreak, and fear came upon me. How could we raise our hand against the gray-haired sister?

Then we heard the patter of feet on a stairway inside, then the sound of a struggle, and as the sister turned we darted by her into the court. The Señorita Isabella had heard our voices and the old gardener of the convent held her back.

I suppose it angered my captain to see those claw-like hands on her shoulder, for he took the gardener by the neck and shook him as a wolf shakes a prairie dog.

"You are very old," said my captain, "and there is not much left of you to kill."

Then he dropped him all in a heap and we left the convent, the Señorita Isabella between us.

They rode before me up the trail. I was to go with them to the divide. Ten miles farther the *padre* would marry them. Then they would go—*quien sabe?*—"Wherever there was need of fighting men."

The moonlight fell across the trail and on the black hair of the Señorita Isabella. I watched her hair gleaming in the moonlight, for she was more lovely than the hills, and I knew it was for the last time. We turned a bend in the trail and there my carbine leaped to my shoulder, for Don Carlos Brevedo sat his horse in the moonlight—waiting.

My captain saw him, too, and spurred his horse beside the horse of Brevedo. My captain's revolver was only a foot from the Spaniard's heart. Brevedo's right arm was in a kind of sling and with his left hand he bared his head.

"Don Carlos," my captain said, "if there is to be any further speech between us, we will ride a little distance off."

"Words are useless things, *Señor el Capitan*," answered Brevedo, and there was neither pride nor anger in his voice. "Almost as useless as bullets. You have won and I have lost. It is very simple. I have only come to tell you to avoid the south trail, for Dominguez rides that way with his *caballeros*. I do this, *Señor el Capitan*," he went on in that low, weary voice of his, "not because I care much what might happen to you, but because no sorrow must come to the Señorita Isabella."

Then he spoke to her:

"We shall be very desolate, señorita, we Spaniards of the plains. It will be hard to believe that our most beautiful has gone."

Then he shook my captain's hand and bowing low over the saddle horn kissed the hand of the Señorita Isabella. Then he smiled, and it cost him much that smile.

"*Adios.*"

"*Adios*," said my captain.

But the Señorita Isabella answered with a voice more tender than the stars—

"*Vaya con Dios, amigo mio.*"

So he left us and his head was just a little bowed. Then I, too, left them. I, too, smiled. Perhaps it cost me more than it cost Brevedo. Then I held my captain's hand a moment and turned down the trail, for I could not smile too long. And on the way back there sat Brevedo in the same patch of moonlight—dreaming.

Dios, the old days pass, but in the blue smoke of a cigaret they come back to us, and once more we are such men as in the years that have died.

Low, *amigo*, bend low, is it not a band of horsemen on the hill beyond?

He Shall Have Who Best Can Keep

A Complete Novelette by Gordon MacCreagh

Author of "Jest of the Jungle," "Jungle Business," etc.

PERMIT me, senhor, since you are a stranger in the city of Manaos, to introduce myself. I am Theophilo Da Costa of the upper rivers and I have to offer you— Ha, you know already? *Graças*, senhor, you are very complimentary to my name, which I trust, is not unearned.

These ivory nuts, then—I have some three thousand tons of them to offer you and I guarantee the quality to be of the very finest. I know that I might obtain a slightly better price from the German house of Braunschweig; but my friend and partner, the Peloroxo, is a patriotic imbecile, and he insists that the first choice be given to an American export house.

All Manaos City is talking about us? Senhor, all Manaos City has talked about Theophilo Da Costa before; but that the name of that "Red-Head" compatriot of yours should be coupled with mine is a new thing in Amazonas. Yet not entirely to be unexpected of that wild blade, when once he had learned our ways and had ceased to ram down our throats the surpassing superiority of that pothole village of his in some back jungle of the central United States which he used to extol so nauseatingly as his "home town in God's country."

The senhor would like to hear the tale of all that bickering over these nuts? Heh-heh, you Americans are all alike. You would rather hear the exploits of some compatriot of yours than the history of the world's greatest heroes. Well, it is a tale not without worth. How much do you know of the beginning of it?

You know that this Dom Sylvestra came up to Santa Isabel with a chartered steamboat and stole our *tagua;* and that the Peloroxo then cut the cable with rifle bullets and let the steamer drift on to the sand-bank of the Island of Peccaries, and that he sat then on the opposite shore with his rifle and prevented those robbers from working the boat off the sand-bank while I hurried down to Manaos to gather a party of our friends and go up to recapture our property.

You know all that? Well then, to cut short a long telling, I found here three of my friends, stout fellows who might be leaned upon in time of trouble; sufficient—with myself and that Red-Head maniac—to make a very good war against the dozen or so of water front sweepings who were stranded with Dom Sylvestra upon the spit of Peccaries Island. I hired also another flat-bottomed river boat of similar tonnage to the robbers, so that not a nut should escape us for want of space. At two and a half *milreis* per kilo—which is the price you must pay us, senhor; or the Fire-Head notwithstanding, I go to the German house. Or perhaps even those English people may pay me more, and their money is of the best. At the price of two and a half *milreis* then, to say nothing of a life or two, one does not

squander ivory nuts of the highest grade.

Within two days of my coming I was ready to return; when whom should I meet, careering wildly through the city and shouting my name, but the father of that Peloroxo who had come, as he said, all the way from America of the north to rescue his son from the manifold dangers of our savage up-river country and to take him home to the shelter of his voluminous family.

A portly man he was, getting on into a well-preserved middle age, with a cold gray eye and a line of determination at his mouth corners which showed me where the son got his pig-headedness.

"*Miravel,*" I wondered, "how do you come to know of all this, senhor? For it is but a week since I left that so much imperiled youth crouching coolly behind a tree and enjoying himself sniping at long range at those who tried to carry an anchor out in a dinghy and plant it upstream so that they might kedge the boat off the sand-bank?"

But of this last situation he had known nothing. The family council had sent him post haste, he said, when the son wrote some months before that he had some little trouble with a brace of bravos who thought to trespass upon his territory. This final danger was the culmination of a frightful condition of life from which the lad must be saved at once. But I told him:

"Have no fear. There is no danger. Your son is sitting in the shelter of the jungle fringe with a rifle of Winchester .45 over his knee. With him are eight naked Indians, blow-gun men bound to him by all the ties of fair treatment backed by the authority of their witch-doctor, who is your son's good friend. When he must sleep, they keep watch. And since the only way that those robbers can escape is to kedge the boat off the sand bank, let your mind rest easy. Twice already before I came away has he shown them that his rifle does not miss. No, there is no danger that they will get away. They will be there when we arrive. Come with us and witness the triumph of your son."

But at that the senhor made a terrible outcry. He would see the *intendente;* he would call upon the *jefe politico;* he would invoke the law and the *guarda civil* and the police; and finally he would go to his consul and demand the protection of the American flag.

Well, senhor, you have been here long enough to know how much power your consul has. Politeness forbade that he should see me smile. But I tried to explain to him.

"Senhor," I said, "at this place, Santa Isabel, where your son holds down that gang, there has never been a policeman in all the history of Amazonas. The law there is that he who can hold shall have. For the rest, there sits the Peloroxo my friend, and here am I, Theophilo, of the upper rivers. What need have we of a whole platoon of police?"

But that man was as set in his ideas as was the son when he first came. For all that I could tell him, he must needs go to his much-harassed consul and worry that unfortunate still further to invoke a power which his school books had told him reached as far even as our country of Amazonas. Having duly absorbed his disillusionment, and looking very bewildered, he consented at last to come with us and to take his boy out of this horrible environment as soon as he should see him.

Thereupon I could no longer hide my smile. I had no means of knowing how strong might have been the dominion of the family upon that lad before he came away from that home town of his. But this I did know—that a year of our jungles had stiffened to hard iron the character that remained soft metal in the sheltered home life, and that the son whom this all-deciding father sought to drag home had grown into a whole man, well able to make his own decisions.

BUT what use to argue with a man grown old in the narrow views of a little townlet lost in the centre of your great country? We took him along with us. And for me, who like to talk of men and places, he served to beguile the six days of our furious race against the currents of the Rio Negro with his talk of the methods of life and business as conducted in this curious home town of his.

Consider the anomaly: He was first and last a business man, he said. Yet the custom of business in that place was an affair of a family sentiment rather than one of the greatest efficiency. The family owned a factory which manufactured some commodity or other; and into this factory they

thrust all the brothers and uncles and sons-in-law of the family to work at a wage no greater than that earned by any outside employee—"to learn the business from the ground up," maintained the man stoutly.

"But, *nom diabo*," said I, "what happens when a youth of the family proves to be unfitted for that particular business? Or when he can command a better wage in some other business? Will he not change his employ?"

"That," said the senhor, almost with horror, "would be disloyal to the family. In union is strength; and the family will never discharge one of its members nor, if the combined family influence can prevent, will it let one go to another business."

"*Mira entas*," I marveled, "and with such methods how do you hope to compete in foreign markets with these German houses and English, who select the men most suited to the work in hand that they can find, regardless of family traditions?"

To which, of course, there was no reply except a repetition of the time-worn adage that in union lay strength, which this good senhor translated to mean family union. So the uncles and brothers-in-law and the patriarchs of the family had sat together in solemn conclave and had decided that this wild young scion of theirs had been granted a full year, time enough to have had his fling; and that now he was to come back to his legitimate place in the factory and hold his nose to the grindstone until such time as he, too, should have proven his worth and might be promoted by the solemn conclave to a position of petty partnership, where, if he continued to toil unceasingly, he might some day, when all the others should be dead or retired, rise to a position of management.

"And to this bondage," said I, "you hope to lure that young blade whom we of the upper rivers call Peloroxo, the Fire-Head?"

"Why not?" said the senhor, mystified. "All his relatives are doing the same thing, and he shall have as his share one and three-tenths per cent. of the stock."

Well, what use? How can one show to a man who has cramped his whole life to fit the requirements of a small-town business the freedom which is necessary to a man who has earned his place amongst us of the upper rivers? All that I could say to him was:

"Very well, senhor, in another day we shall reach this sand spit of the Island of Peccaries below Santa Isabel and when we shall have taken your son's cargo away from those robbers you can take him back to your factory—perhaps. And I shall be glad

to buy his share of this *tagua* business that he has built up out of nothing—if the price, in view of the manifest dangers which encompass the business, be not too high.

Whereat he insisted that this was not a business but a competition in banditry, and I could have it for no price at all, so he might only carry his son back to the ordered security of the family factory. Which was satisfactory enough to me. For, as you know yourself, senhor, *tagua* at two and a half *milreis* is no business to be sneered at, even if we do have to hold what we have with a rifle occasionally. So I told him:

"*Bom.* Tomorrow, when we come within rifle range of that stranded steamer, you shall see how hazardous is this business and you shall regulate the price accordingly on behalf of your son—perhaps."

But, maldiça Deus, my confident prophecy turned out to be the most complete failure of my life and a surprize that bereft me of speech as well as of sense.

As we steamed and snorted up below the lower edge of the Island of Peccaries I scanned the opposite shore on the right-hand side with pleasant anticipation, expecting every moment to hear the hail of the Peloroxo and to see him leaping up and down and waving his greeting to our approach. But we drew near and ever nearer, and no signal came to us. I told the pilot to pass between the island and the right-hand shore, on which side I had left my friend with a rifle over his knee. But still there was no sign and I began to feel a certain anxiety. Yet in the next moment I said to myself:

"Pshaw, what a fool thou art, Theophilo! Of course he will not leap up and show himself; for, *caralhos*, will not those bandits on

the boat have been waiting for two weeks for just such a chance to get a shot at him?"

And I called to the pilot, too, to slow down; and to the senhor I advised that he take shelter in his cabin. For abreast of the next little jutting fringe of trees we would draw into full view of the stranded steamer with its dozen of desperate and angry pirates, and bullets were to be expected—unless indeed the Peloroxo had so tamed them in the interval that they would be ready to submit to our reinforcements.

But the senhor, who had prated so about lawlessness and danger produced the first surprize by calling upon the name of the devil after the manner of your gringos and demanding of God that his soul be condemned to perdition if he would stir a foot. As for me, I had no time to enter into argument with that belligerent *caballero*. *Dientro*, did I not know the obstinacy of the son? So I called to my three to take such cover as they might and to be prepared for whatever might befall. But, *mil diabos*, the surprize was stunning in its sudden completeness. Slowly we drew abreast of the tree fringe. Even more slowly with our nerves all tense and our rifles ready, we forged ahead; and—nothing befell at all. There at the sand spit where we had expected to find our stranded boat with our cargo of ivory nuts and our dozen of ruffians, or at all events such number of them as the Peloroxo had not killed at long range—we found nothing at all.

WHERE we had expected a steamboat and the clamor of men was only the smooth clean sand spit with never a mark of a keel upon it. Beyond was the empty surface of the great river, shining like a black mirror in the sun. For five miles it stretched into the far heat haze with only the evil snout of an occasional caiman floating like a dead log to mar the clean expanse.

Sanctissimas! That was like a blow in the stomach to me, leaving me with a sick feeling of emptiness as blank as the river itself. I ask you, what was I to do? So taken aback was I that I could think neither of explanation for the phenomenon nor of action to meet the situation. All that I could do was to call upon the names of the saints; and they, of course, helped me no more than they had ever done in the past. To add to my confusion of thought the senhor came running and kept tugging at my sleeve.

"Where?" he kept demanding, "where is this ship with a stolen cargo, and where is my son? Where is this place Santa Isabel where there is to be a fight?"

I cursed him with what breath the blow had left to me. Yet there was a thought in his chatter. Diagonally across the river, at a distance of half a mile and just around a point, was Santa Isabel which was the monthly meeting-place of all the gatherers of *castanhas* at Santa Isabel at this time. But there was a solitary adobe hut which was the hotel, and the owner and conductor of the hotel resided there permanently with sundry wives and dogs. He would surely have news.

So we slanted hurriedly over to the bare mud bank that was Santa Isabel.

But all the information that fool could give me was as meager as his hotel accommodations. The boat had been there until some two or three days ago, he said—or at least he thought it had been; he had grown weary of walking out to the point to look. The Peloroxo had been on guard somewhere in the jungle fringe of the shore side. Of that he was sure because at intervals he had heard a shot or two. Just how long or until how many days ago he could not say. Nor could he remember when he heard the last of the shots.

Que diabo, his *manioc* patch needed cultivation, and he had to superintend his wives at work or they would sit in the shade and chatter and would accomplish nothing. What time did he have to go running to see each time that people shot at one another? This was not his war.

The various nut-gatherers, too, who had been present when this war began, seeing that it had settled down to a question of a seige rather than an active battle, had grown tired and had gone about their business. So that there was nobody who knew anything.

That the stranded boat was no longer there was news to him. I could have beaten the fool for his apathy, living as he did within five minutes' walk of the point from where he could command a full view of all that went on. Yet, as he said, what the ——, could he sit on a point of rock all day and watch a long-range duel that was lasting into two weeks when *manioc* had to be cultivated? Doubtless, he ventured the opinion,

one of the brigands on the steamer must have landed a lucky shot and killed the Peloroxo; and then, of course, they would have lost no time in taking out an anchor and kedging off and proceeding down river with the stolen cargo to Manaos. Had we not met them as we came up?

Deus defende. That was an evil thought. But the truth of it could doubtless be ascertained.

"Fool of a fathead," I said to the hotel-keeper. "Send immediately a brace of your wives to hunt the jungle fringe on this shore for half a mile up and down and to bring word of bodies or of bones or of anything they may find."

And on that tedious word we had to wait till those women returned. Dull-witted creatures they were, as all the women of the Baniwa tribes; but they knew enough of their native jungle to make a search along the river bank. In an hour or so they returned and reported that they had found nothing except the places where the white man had cooked his food. No bodies lay in the mold, nor any ant-cleaned bones. So the mystery remained full of anxiety. That one of those waterfront rats should have contrived to hit a jungle man such as the Peloroxo had grown to be was almost unthinkable. And yet—who can tell? An unlucky shot might—

"Name of the ——," I took oath, "if that should prove to have been the case I would hunt those miserable wharf-weevils up and down all the rivers of Amazonas and I would make me a sail for my *batelao* out of their skins. They would not escape me."

Somewhere farther up the river was that other steamer. Of course we had not met it as we came up. Those men knew well enough that I, Theophilo, of the upper rivers, would be coming up with a reinforcement. So, however they had contrived to get off the sand spit, one thing was very sure; and that was that they would not be attempting to come down river to Manaos. Not yet at all events. Doubtless their plan was to hide up somewhere among the million creeks and islands of the Rio Negro until I should have given up the hunt and then to steal down with their stolen cargo. Fools! As though that would save them from the ultimate vengeance of Theophilo Da Costa!

Yet in the meanwhile— *Sangcristu*, vengeance did not solve the immediate problem nor answer the immediate question. What had become of the Peloroxo? It was a frenzy that apparently the only means of finding out was either to capture that steamboat or to go on up into the *igarapé* Marauia, the tributary creek three days further up where the Peloroxo had established himself as *padrao* of a score of back jungle villages which he had trained to gather his *tagua*. There those eight men who had been with him must surely have returned; and they would have news.

Good then. Both pirates and Indians were farther up river. Yet I must proceed with caution. For just above Santa Isabel the Rio Negro is broken up by hundreds of islands with channels between, any one of which is wide enough and deep enough for the passing of such a steamboat. For the present, then, I could see nothing to do but to go up to the narrowest part of the river before it opens up—which even there, more than a thousand miles from the sea, is a good two miles wide—and there in that narrow spot to anchor in the middle of it so that whatever was above could not pass. Once there, said I to myself, we should have leisure to sit in conference and would doubtless produce between us some plan of action.

SO THERE we proceeded and dropped our anchor right in the middle of the channel, and at last I was able to draw breath with some satisfaction again. How was I to know of the second instalment of the horrid surprize that fate was weaving for us? So we settled ourselves in reasonable comfort and held a council to decide upon our next action.

That was in the early afternoon that we dropped anchor; and from then on till nightfall I heard more foolish suggestions than could have been evolved by an equal number of legislators. The senhor particularly proved himself to be the very father of his son by telling us how the situation would be handled in his own home town. Truly, it was beginning to be observed that this local patriotism was a disease with all people who live in the central part of the United States. I was anxious to hear what copy-book wisdom would come from the little home state, so instead of laughing at him I told him to expound his creed.

"First of all," he said. "This is not businesslike. You, as men of business, can not

spare the time to hunt these robbers. Furthermore, this steamer that you have chartered costs you every day that you keep it whatever it costs. Now, in my home town a business man would find it cheaper to turn this matter over to men whose business it is to hunt robbers. I understand that in Manaos you must pay the agents of the law to enforce law. It would be cheaper for you, then, to pay the police to follow up this matter, and to return to the conduct of your own businesses."

Well, *carramba*, it had to be admitted that from the point of view of civilized business the man spoke sense. But he was even as his son had been. What that lad had shoved down our throats from the teachings of his home town had always been sense. What he had to learn was that our country of Amazonas was considerably different from his home town. So I explained to the senhor with condescension instead of derision.

"Senhor," I said, "of the three points that you make on the basis of the practise of business men in your home town, three do not fit in these upper rivers. For first of all, as men conducting businesses six days' journey farther than the law reaches, it is our permanent necessity to spare the time at all times to keep what business we have made. Furthermore, the cost of charter of this boat will well and surely be added to what I shall exact from this Dom Sylvestra who has hired these robbers. And lastly, the police, senhor, are men of the cities, while the robbers are hard men of the rivers. I know them all by name, *castanha* gatherers mostly, who know the river conditions. They would play a game with the police, and when they were tired of it they would knock them on the head and they would be the richer by so many rifles. No, senhor, the best people to defend our business in the upper rivers is ourselves, and only those who can defend their business can keep it."

Whereat he snorted his disgust and his horror of such business conditions and repeated with conviction that he was more thankful than he could express that he had come to take his son out of them.

But all this talk upon the theories of business advanced us nowhere. Night came upon us before any useful suggestion had been forthcoming. Nor could I blame the others, for I was no wiser than they. Tomorrow, however, was another day, and it must be admitted that we in our country are ever prone to postpone unfinished things to "*amanha*."

And it was in penalty for that disposition that my great shame came upon me. And yet I have asked myself. How was I to blame? In my own *batelão* I take pride that no man has ever caught Theophilo Da Costa napping. No matter where I may be or how secure I may consider the situation, I remain continuously on the alert, and when I sleep I see to it that an Indian whom I can rely upon keeps watch. And, had I not so completely despised that bandit gang, I would have done so even here, on my own account, in spite of the fact that it was not my ship.

Yet, *meu Mae*, how was I to post a watch on that steamer anchored out in the middle of the river channel? I was not in charge of that boat. I had chartered it; and the conduct of it was in the hands of certain mud-witted officers who had had the effrontery already to argue with me about the navigation of fast water in the upper rivers.

But it is my observation that all ship men are alike. Because some person in a bureau of navigation has endowed them with a cap and with a line or two of gold braid, they must know everything, forsooth, about all matters connected with water of whatever nature and boats of whatever build or size. *Canastos*, I have even known such fellows to hold their opinion against me about what manner of Indians and birds and beasts lived in the jungles which they but saw from the deck of their ship as they passed.

Well, was it not the duty of the officers of the ship to set a watch? And yet—*tcha-tcha*, I take great shame to myself. For above Santa Isabel is the country of the upper rivers, and I, Theophilo of the upper rivers, should have left no precaution to any man.

But what use? The omission was mine, and I have duly paid my penalty of shame. The night fell, and I with the rest of our little party swung over hammocks from the ship's stanchions across the upper deck and left the disposition of lights and of a watch to the ship's officers, or to the cook or whoever it might be whose duty it is in a steamboat to attend to such things.

Apparently, between the lot of them they did nothing. Anchored in midstream where there was no other navigation they felt as safe as in the hotel in Manaos city. So it

seems that the whole ship took holiday and slept and so fell a victim just as easily as might have been expected of those ship men if we four river men had not been on board.

The first intimation that I received of it was a shot in the night, evidently as a signal, and even as I reached for my rifle which hung by its sling from my hammock rope a great weight fell upon me. A half a dozen weights, breaking the hammock rope and bearing me under them to the deck.

Well, senhor, I am Theophilo. A night attack was no new thing to me; nor am I without a certain experience in rough and ready combat. Two or three or more of the dim forms that clutched at me I hurled from me. Yet, *caralhos*, I could see by the light of the ship's lanterns that the place where each hammock had hung was marked by a writhing swarm of dark figures which heaved and surged from under, as some creature that is overrun by ants.

I COULD see, too, that these were naked Indians who attacked us; and I fought the more desperately; for let me tell you, senhor, I who have seen and know, it is no pleasant anticipation to be captured by Indians of Amazonas. Sturdy fellows these were, who fought like panthers, making no noise other than the snarling and the hissing of their breaths as they strained in the fight.

Clamor enough there was from various parts of the ship. From the iron deck below came the sound of thumps as hammocks fell, and the ensuing shouts of dismay and quickly smothered calls for help from the ship's crew. From the upper or passenger deck where my friends had slept, while there came no calls for help, there issued from each struggling heap oaths, not triumphant, but hard-pressed, and by their indications it was clear to me that there was little hope of help coming to me.

Everybody on the ship, it seemed, was well taken care of at once. The attackers must have been told off, so many to each man; and, *caramba*, if one naked savage had swarmed aboard of that ship in the dark there must have been a hundred. And my courage ebbed with my strength as I caught glimpses through the sweating figures that clawed at me of the dim shapes of —— knows how many dug out canoes surrounding the ship.

Never had I seen an attack so well planned or so swiftly carried out. In the shortest imaginable space of time the sounds of struggle began to quiet down and I knew that the ship's company were all either dead or bound. Finally my own strength gave out and I could no longer resist the hands that grasped me and the weights that smothered me. I was borne to the floor for the tenth time, and what had never happened to me before was my ignominious fate. I was compelled to give in, to lie gasping.

And then I heard a voice giving swift directions. A white man's voice. Of course the thing had been under white man's direction. Indians alone could never have organized so successful a night raid.

"Enough," it cried. "If any man still struggles knock him on the head."

It spoke in the Bahuana dialect, of which I could understand a little. But I knew that voice. A man's naked belly lay across my face. But with desperate effort I contrived to open my mouth and bite deep into the muscle wall. With a yell the man bounded from me; and I lifted my voice and shouted with all my strength.

"*Ohe*, Peloroxo. Fool of a friend. By the holy shoes, what goat's judgment is this, that you make a night attack upon us? Call off your men before we do them a damage."

Upon my words there fell a sudden silence. Such little struggling as still continued ceased, and even those wild Indians relaxed a little, almost as if they had understood. Then, out of the night, from over the side of the ship, arose a great swearing in English, the name of the Almighty being coupled indiscriminately with that of the Evil One and his abode, after the manner of you gringos. Then a great laugh and the sound of a man making his way hurriedly to the upper deck. I took advantage of the diversion to throw my captors from me, so that at least I met my friend standing on my own feet. And as he came pushing through the dark masses of swarming Indians, I abused him with thoroughness and indignation, saying that we had been hard put to it to refrain from killing some of his men.

But he believed my subterfuge not at all; and he strode forward and gripped my hand chuckling and taking oath by the name of Saint Mike and by the affection that he bore for Saint Pete that this was the greatest jest

of his life; that Theophilo of the upper rivers should have been captured asleep by his own pupil of barely a year. *Por Deus*, what a tale that would make for the cafés when we should next see Manaos. But I cut him short with coldness and told him—

"Cease your ribald jesting, my overweening friend; for I have here one who will properly discipline you with all the authority of all your whole home town behind him."

Instantly he became grave, almost apprehensive, and:

"Who, then?" he demanded.

"Come," I said, "I will present you." And I led him past several dim piles of men to a farther pile which marked the place where his father's hammock had hung. To the grunting beneath that pile I spoke:

"Senhor Featherstone, here at Santa Isabel I bring to you, according to my promise, your son."

The Indians still sprawled like ants over their game, for they had received no word yet to release their captives, and they made no move without the Peloroxo's direction.

"Father of God!" he exclaimed. "What is this?" And he barked an order to them.

Slowly then the piles disintegrated and men rose from beneath them, all cursing at once. The senhor, though he scarce had breath to speak, murmured first with unabated belligerence:

"I think I put two of them out of business, by golly." And then, instead of embracing his son and kissing him on both cheeks, as was to be expected, he took him only by the hand and pumped it up and down severely while he kept repeating:

"Why, Jim, old boy, how's tricks? 'S good to see you, son. How's things coming, eh?"

And the Peloroxo, great oaf, could do nothing but repeat the same formula. How long this extraordinary form of greeting might have continued I cannot say. But now muffled cries began to arise from the crew from the lower part of the ship, calling to know what all this was about and clamoring to be released.

"Gee," exclaimed the Peloroxo in sudden remembrance, "I must tell my men to—say, I hope we haven't hurt any of them."

"As for me," I said, "I hope most devoutly that they have slain several of them. Bid your men throw them overboard, as also certain officers whom I shall point out to you. Ourselves, we shall conduct this ship and so shall avoid further disaster."

BUT he laughed and shouted to his Indians, and they, too, laughed like children at a great joke and slapped their thighs and laughed yet more as they began to make their way back to their canoes. And the lights were turned up, and presently in the place of Indians the lower deck began to spew up the members of the ship's company, all waving their arms and all jabbering at once. I advanced upon them fiercely.

"Back," I ordered them, "back to your quarters, mud-heads, and stay there till I give leave. Let only the cook and his *moços* make speed and serve a small black coffee, and let the clamor cease."

There was some little murmuring and much questioning. But I was in no mood to answer questions or to brook delay. So presently order was restored and, with the first coming of daylight the coffee was served on the upper deck, and we sat down to exchange news. The explanation was simple.

"*Amigo* Theophilo," said the Red-Head, "we have both made the same mistake. We have neither of us given credit to those robbers for sufficient cleverness. Upon me, as I sat comfortable on my guard there, they turned a good trick. First they made another attempt one night before the rising of the moon to carry their anchor out. But pshaw, that was nothing. I could see the dark blot of their boat against the surface shine of the water, and with a couple of shots I sent it scurrying back to the shelter of the ship. After that, what with my eight Indians watching while I slept, I felt secure.

"But those fellows were nobody's fools. Seeing that they could do nothing so long as I remained on guard, they set about to create a diversion. Some of them under cover of the ship's hull, went across to the farther shore and there organized a war party of the Baniwas, telling them that a small party of Bahuana, my men from up river, were encroaching upon their territory. And one night they came across lower down and advanced up jungle upon us. I don't know how many there were in that war party; but they must have been quite a crowd, and they were cleverly directed. That skirmishing in the dark occasioned more noise than damage.

"But the long and the short of it was that

when it was all over three of my men lay somewhere out in the jungle, and I had been kept sufficiently employed to give those bandits a chance to carry their anchor out and drop it well upstream. Which was all that they wanted. For the attack melted away, and when I was able to return to my post on the shore I was in time to see the steamer haul off the sand bank with its winch. And then, while the men remained carefully under cover, I could hear their yells of derision while the boat snorted merrily off under its own steam. So, *amigo* Theophilo, you must admit that this Dom Sylvestra is a lot cleverer than we gave him credit for."

But I said:

"No. That was never the thought of Sylvestra, who is no more than a crafty business man of the city. That would have been Diego of the dog ears, or that arch ruffian, Esteban. River men both, who know this water like the bottom of a drinking cup. They will give us trouble yet. What plan had you in mind, my friend, when you so cunningly attacked us this night?"

"What plan?" he repeated. "Everything is now altered. What could I do when I saw them sail away up river, but go as fast as I could to make preparations for a great war? So I went up to my *igarapé* of Marauia and gathered all the Indians who work for me and every possible canoe and came down to meet you. Only I didn't expect you so soon; and when I saw this steamer of identical size anchored like a refuse barge in midstream I said to myself, 'This can never be Theophilo'—and those pirates give me credit for as little sense as I had to give them. So I came, as you know, and found—ho-ho—I found Theophilo of the upper rivers asleep like a turtle on a mud bank."

But I silenced his ribald laughter by adding to that:

"Almost as though I might have been Theophilo of your home town in the central wilderness of the United States."

He had the effrontery to laugh; and—

"Well," he said, "if I was a hick once, I have given proof that I have grown to be an up-river man in that I have captured Theophilo of the upper rivers in his own water."

But at that the senhor, his father, cut in with a shocked expression as at a blasphemy. It was apparent to me from his manner that this term, "hick," was the most mortal affront that could be applied to those central States.

"Oh, come now," he made remonstrance. "That isn't right. I don't like to hear you speak of your little old home town in that way. You should always remember that you owe all that you are, mentally, physically and morally to the good American upbringing you received there."

Alas for the credit of the associations of youth! The Peloroxo was in no wise abashed. Yet he sought to mollify his father by making concession.

"Good groundwork, Dad; and I wouldn't want to be without it. But it must be admitted, as I found to my cost when I began to meet the rest of the world, that my outlook was a bit, er—provincial."

At that my three friends who had come with me on the rescue party shouted their mirth aloud; for they all remembered, as did I, what an obsession it had been with the lad, when he first came among us, that the only right way to think or to do or to live was the way of his little home town. Whereat he was this time very properly abashed, and covered his confusion by making a consession to our side.

"As to mentality, let my friends judge. But as to physique it must be admitted, Dad, that I'm a lot stronger and healthier since I've been out in the open river, and it's here that I've learned to stand on my own feet."

Which was true. He had come out, with the makings of a man indeed; but was at best a youth as soft as he was opinionated. Now he stood, sun-browned and as hard of muscle as he was of feature. A whole man of the upper rivers.

The father looked at him with a certain satisfaction which almost overlaid his sense of shock at previous heresy. Yet his very words showed that the satisfaction was that of a builder of business at the prospect of a strong new plank to be built into the structure of the family factory.

"There's nobody gladder than your old dad to see it, son," he said. "But now, before you talk any further of plans for going on a wild goose chase after this last cargo of yours, let me tell you that your partner here has offered to buy out your share of this precarious business; and I think I can assure you that, in view of the experience you have gained, the board of directors back

home will agree with me in placing you amongst the officers of our company with a corresponding salary of as much as fifty or sixty dollars a week."

I MUST confess to a feeling of anxiety; for while to my thinking I could conceive of no fate more horrible to an active man who has learned the taste of our river jungles and the ever present expectation of some new thing happening at any moment round the next corner than to be immured in an office of a factory in a subordinate position. While my blood chilled at the very contemplation of such a life, *defende me Deus*, I knew what a matter of religious faith to these home-towners was that tradition of family unity; and who can tell how an early religious training may hang over the most unexpected of men.

But the Peloroxo was one of those in whom family tradition had not stamped out a still earlier family tradition. His bold spirit had come to him from his father's father and from that father's father, who had been of those hardy pioneers who had built the foundations of that great America of the north. Just such men as we need here in Amazonas to develop the equally great possibilities of this country.

Yet my heart ceased to beat as I saw him hesitate. It was clear that he was swayed between obedience to the call of his father or to the call of his grandfather. But for only a minute. His spirit clung true to the demand for freedom and action that was his heritage. After that his hesitation was only over the manner of his refusal. And the manner of it was, of course, typical of all the disrespect that you gringos show toward your parents. Instead of kissing his father's hand and begging to be forgiven for venturing to hold a different opinion, he said bruskly:

"Gee, Dad, I hate to have you think I'm throwing down the family. But goshalmighty, I'd like to have you put it up to that board of directors to consider what they offer me—a job in the office at fifty a week! While here I'm my own boss in my own business. I'm a free agent in God's good open air and I can knock out, as soon as I get that cargo back and get things going—why I ought to be making an easy five hundred a week in another year or two. And then I'll be able to knock off for a spell and take a run up and jeer at those poor slaves in the factory. Dad, it don't balance at all."

Which was exactly what I had told the senhor. Only I, grown man that I am, would never have dared to speak to my father with so little deference. But I leapt up and slapped the lad on the back and congratulated him before his stand might be shaken by argument.

"Now you are truly emancipated," said I. "A full-fledged river runner. And that point being properly settled, let us without further talk come to a decision about how to get that cargo back, bearing in mind the while whether it might not be cheaper, as the senhor your father suggests, to let the cargo go and to exact such reparation as we may from that gang as later opportunity offers."

But here the Peloroxo was wise in his obstinacy.

"No," he said, "*por Deus, amigo*, I will never let that cargo go. For one reason, I think we can so manage that it will not be so very expensive; and for another, if we once let those pirates escape with one single nut of ours we will have to spend the next five seasons in teaching all the rest of the river that what we have once gained is ours and that we can hold it."

He was abundantly right, of course. This was a case that all the river was watching, and the lesson of a severe retribution was necessary. So without argument I called upon him to say his plan by which means the cost of that retribution would not be too great.

"Well," he said, "they're somewhere above here, aren't they? So we've got them bottled."

"*Bom*," I agreed, "but you must remember, my young friend, that this Black Water of ours is considerable of a river. 'Somewhere above here' means navigable water through any of a thousand channels; and when you add to that innumerable tributaries and back creeks into which a shallow draught vessel may penetrate for a hundred miles or more, you will see that there is opportunity for hiding for five years. It was upon that problem that we were engaged when we decided to sleep upon it in the hope of clearer reasoning in the morning."

But this Peloroxo had a faculty for putting his finger on the spot.

"The only problem," he said, "is to keep

them from doubling back and escaping."

But I disagreed with him.

"Not so, my sanguine young friend," I pointed out. "With our rifles on this boat anchored in midstream it is true we can hold them. It is barely a mile to either shore, and we shall not be caught asleep again. But that will not bring them into our arms to surrender. There remains the problem of pursuit and of the cost of maintaining this accursed steam barge on guard."

He threw back his head and grinned at me with a wrinkled nose, and I knew that he was pleased to be able to refute me.

"For just that matter, *amigo*, I have made provision," he chuckled. "Look, I have brought all the men from all the villages of my *igarapé* of Marauia. Four hundred and seventeen strong canoe men and four subchiefs. An army worthy of Theophilo himself, no? And to you, my friend, I give credit for my teaching; for it was by your advice that I became the supporter of the chief *ipagé*. Wherefore now in my hour of need I sent him a present of a small bag of salt and laid my case before him; and he immediately proclaimed a big witch-dancing and told the people that the omens were strong and that they should follow me.

"One hundred and thirty-eight big canoes I was able to round up. About thirty belonging in the villages, and the rest those that I have been building for the transportation of my *tagua* to Santa Isabel. So that we have here both an army and a fleet; and we can proceed up river, combing every channel and nosing into every inlet as we go. How far up or where those pirates may be hiding we can not guess. But this is certain: That they can't slip by us, and sooner or later we must find them. And then—" the grin of that shameless young ruffian broke out with renewed malice—"a crew of naked Indians that has captured Theophilo of the upper rivers will surely find no difficulty in capturing a shipload of bandits."

Well, so it is with you gringos. What respect could I expect from one who addressed his own father with slang? I said only to him:

"*Picaro*, it is well that you have profited by Theophilo's advice. But there still remains, my very clever young friend, the problem of the expense of this steamboat that we have chartered to come to your rescue."

BUT he only grinned the wider. I might have known that he was waiting for just some such chance to entrap me in my speech.

"Nay," said he. "There will be no expense. In fact, there may even be a profit. For would I come down with a hundred and thirty-eight good canoes empty? That would be unworthy of a graduate of my home town business college. Look over the side, now that the daylight has come, and you will see that each canoe carries a full load of *tagua*. And while I sat below there on guard, were my men idle? Why should they be? I sent my *capitão* back in my *batelão* with a crew made up of some of the men folks of the hotel-keeper's wives. Shiftless fellows enough, and poor paddle men; but good enough to reach the Marauia; and two full loads lie now in the old rubber shed beside the hotel. Sufficient, with this load, to fill perhaps half this steamer; and the *castanheiros* have left enough of their Brazil nuts to fill the other half. So what reason is there why we should not send the boat back to Manaos with a full freight?"

Por Diabo, well and truly did that scapegrace heap confusion upon me. Which happily was covered by the sudden acclamation of his father. The senhor leapt from his seat and went, as I thought, to embrace his son. But instead of embracing him, he did no more than shake hands with him and pat him on the back, saying:

"That was well done, son. That was a good business move. Very good. In fact, I doubt if your brothers, with their home training, could have done any better."

The Peloroxo had the grace to turn as red almost as his hair. And I, fearful lest this should lead up once again to the renewal of the attempt to incorporate such promising material into the family factory, made haste to cause a diversion by introducing the discussion of plans for procedure without any further delay.

For the five of us, up river men all, there was no trouble. This little expedition would be a jaunt not so unpleasant with the pleasing prospect of regaining our own and visiting a just retribution upon our robbers. The Peloroxo had a *batelão* as good as my own, a thirty-foot boat built of stout planks with a palm-thatch roof over the after half and with space for six or eight paddle men in front. In such craft I have spent months of a full rainy season with comfort. Our

anxiety was for the senhor. For after all, up river travel is not without its dangers and its hardships, to say nothing of the insect pests which would meet us if the pursuit should continue as far up as Umarituba. The climate, too, was a matter to be considered. For while this was not the rainy season, we were within half a degree of the Equator. So the heat was something not to be forgotten. In the steamboat, well and good; the speed of the boat made breeze enough to render our temperature of a hundred and fifteen degrees pleasant enough. But the slow progress in the cramped quarters of a *batelão* was something different again. A travel, then, which would be easy enough for an up river man would be no easy experience for a well nurtured man of business from the little town in "God's Country." So my suggestion was that the senhor should return to Manaos upon the steamer; and I offered as a sop to his dignity the proposal that he might well handle the disposal of our cargo in the city.

But, *carramba*, what an outcry the man raised at that! He made oath with the same paucity of expression that had hampered his son upon his first arrival, before he had learned a mouthful or two of good mouth-filling Portuguese. Would he go back on that steamer? Not for a minute, condemned by God; and might God condemn him too if he would now quit. He had come to take his son back to the family factory; and if the boy was too pig-headed to obey him now, by the name of the Saviour he would come right along with him until further vicissitude should have brought about to the boy a saner realization of where his best interest lay, and should have instilled some sound judgment into his head.

Verily I could see here the awful determination that was already sprouting in the son. A good enough quality for an up river man if tempered by just that thing—judgment. But what could I do? Could I, in the presence of the son insist that he should go back? Could the son order the father back? The matter was finally settled by the Peloroxo saying:

"Very well, Dad, come along then. It will be hideously uncomfortable for you. But, who knows? These upper rivers have taught me to realize that maybe the other fellow is right sometimes, even if he doesn't come from home. Maybe they'll show you that I'm not altogether wrong in sticking to my own business."

So at that it stood. We dropped down the four miles to the landing place of Santa Isabel and loaded up the steamer with the collection of nuts, giving receipts to the hotel keeper for the various deposits of *castanha* that we took; and we despatched it with a letter to the house of Araujo to take charge of our cargo until we should return. Then we started on our punitive expedition like a very fleet of Vasco da Gama.

Half a day up was the first of the side channels. A long island thick with cane jungle split the stream for a good four miles, and at about half its length two other islands cropped out on the left side and a third farther up on the right. Any one of the channels between these was wide enough and deep enough to shelter a boat while another might pass up on the other side, less than half a mile away and be unaware of its presence.

But with our fleet of canoes it was another matter. We divided them and sent a portion to scour each channel and to meet again at the upper end with the arrangement that any party that might chance upon the pirate steamer should immediately blow a signal upon a hollow palm trunk *mambi*, which instrument can be heard for a good five miles over the water. This method of progression was necessarily slow, but it was sure, and we well knew that not a canoe or a lone fisherman could escape those Indians without being reported.

The senhor asked a question—

"What is to prevent, son, suppose that a canoe party among whom there is no rifleman—or even our party with rifles—should discover this boat; what is to prevent it from just steaming away at twice our speed?"

I waited to see whether his river-craft would cope with this conundrum. And he laughed and told his father that one of the things that the upper rivers had taught him was observation; and that the answer to his question was just that—steam. For if he should come upon the boat lying up somewhere, it would not have steam up; while if it had steam up, since all those boats were wood burners, its smoke would betray it. But I asked him another question myself. What if the boat were to be hiding up some one of the tributary rivers which might extend for God knew how far into the jungle?

But he only laughed again and said to me with mocking—

"The same thing that you would do, my dear teacher."

And at that I was content to let it rest, taking a pride in my pupil before my other friends, yet standing by with my twenty years of experience to see that he might not slip up on some unexpected condition and so provide more ammunition for his father. Not a single chance was I taking that our quarry might escape us or that our Peloroxo might be dragged away out of our up-river country which needed him.

SO WHEN we came to the *igarapê* of Marié which flows in at the right bank I said no word but stood silent and looked at him questioningly. This Marié, while we called it no more than a creek, was a river of a good half kilometer's width and it stretched back into the jungle farther even than I knew. The Peloroxo pointed with his chin at the group of *molocas* on the shore.

"Where there are people living it is easy," he said. "Here we go ashore and ask. Do we take my stick or yours, *amigo*?"

"Let it be yours," I said, "and let us see its efficacy."

So we went, he and I and his father, in his *batelão;* and we sent his carved stick up to the council-house and awaited its reception. And, *carramba*, the deference with which it was treated was as great almost as I might have expected of my own. He laughed again like an overgrown boy.

"I told you, didn't I?" he chuckled, "that I am almost a neophyte of my witch-doctor; and he has carved me a very good stick."

And he explained to his father that these sticks were something like calling cards, or rather, letters of recommendation among the river tribes; that without them no white man would meet with a friendly reception and that no Indian would give him any information. It was, therefore, the ambition of every river man to possess himself of a stick; but only upon a basis of fair dealing would a witch-doctor provide a white man with a good stick, and according to their future dealings would a witch-doctor here and there add a rune or two to a stick. It was something of a conceit to me that my own stick was carved down the half of its length; and while I was never able to find out what it said about me, I presented it like an unopened letter of introduction and was satisfied that its effect was of the best.

And what do you think was the senhor's response? Instead of being glad that his son had such a good recommendation, he shook his head and groaned in his belly and said:

"My son, my son, I'm afraid you've slipped far in this lawless land from the careful training which good Dr. Poynter gave you back home. I don't know that I like all this pandering to heathen priests; and I'm sure that your Uncle Malachi and Aunt Sarah would not approve."

Well, *Sancta mae*, what use to argue with a man of so restricted a view? Suffice it that we were received in the council-house with all honor and that the ceremony of breaking the *cassava* bread and smoking the cigar was performed between us and the assembled chiefs and armed men. And, ho-ho, the senhor almost choked to death over the red-hot pepper sauce into which the ceremony demanded that he dip his bread. The chiefs told us then that the great smoke *batelão* had not passed up their river, but that hunters of the village had reported that they had seen it going on up river on the farther side of one of the islands.

That was four days ago.

"*Diabocito*," said I. "Four days ago and going hard? Are they hoping perhaps to traverse the rapids of the São Gabriel and to pass through the natural canal of Casiquiari and so to come out in the Orinoco in Venezuela? *Celestes*, some of those fellows are desperate enough to try it."

"*Valgame Deus!* Would that be possible?" demanded the Peloroxo quickly.

But I shrugged. What could I say? Who knows what wild thing might not be done by crazy men in these rivers? Water enough there was; and if they could pass the rapids in so large a boat, who could tell what they might do? I have long since given up saying, "This thing or that thing is impossible." Yet I had no real anxiety. No man had ever made the passage in anything larger than a *batelão;* though the great American explorer, Dr. Rice, very nearly succeeded in a launch. But I had little fear that these rogues would have that much courage or initiative; and as I judged the water this far down, it was my opinion that there would surely not be depth at the São Gabriel to let so large a boat pass, however desperate and crazy they might be.

So we passed on up the great river, combing every channel and nosing into every side creek where even a canoe might hide. Clean channels where the water ran swift and carried a cooling breeze on the surface currents; sluggish channels where the high trees blocked all passage of wind and the air was fetid and heavy with the smell of orchids; twisted *igarapés* where the trailing lianas hung down on either side like a wall and the heavy orchid scent was overlaid by the stench of things ages long dead.

A pity, thought I, that no *scientifico* such as I have guided sometimes is not with us to take advantage of all this exploration. For never had that river been so thoroughly searched. Sometimes a full day would pass before all the canoes would meet at the upper end of some network of channels and make their reports.

Nothing. Always nothing. Tales enough they brought. Adventures and mishaps and accidents. Stories of giant serpents and queer beasts of the jungle and mysterious denizens of the black water. But no sign of a flat-bottomed sternwheel boat.

The thing was beginning to be a mystery. One day a brace of canoes failed to turn up at the meeting place. Nor did they ever catch up with the rest. What mischance of the river had overtaken them, what beast or monster of the foul water, we never knew. Their fate remained a mystery and added to our anxiety about our quarry.

Had they, searching together chanced upon the steamer and been swiftly annihilated; and had the boat thus doubled back and escaped? But inquiry showed that the channel where those canoes had gone was too narrow to admit such a steamer; they had gone only because the order was to leave no channel unexplored. And then again, we had heard no shots. So we agreed that our enemies were still ahead. But the Peloroxo laid those canoes against their account.

"They were good lads," he said. "Nine of my own men. I shall exact indemnity from those pirates to pay to their families."

So we went on as before, combing our river from shore to shore and learning much that even I never knew of before. The question was put to me. Where could that boat possibly be headed for? Was it reasonable to suppose that those bandits, two of whom at least knew the upper water, would just keep running into the blind alley blocked by the São Gabriel? Yet what could I say? Who could guess what new thing might not be thought out by that gang between them. I myself have invented ways out of difficulties which had never been thought of before; and I had to give credit to Esteban the Heretic and to Diego of the Dog-Ears for cleverness. For ten years or more they had constantly affronted me in one way and another, and they still lived. So my only opinion remained that they could not pass beyond the São Gabriel and that they were surely hoping to hide somewhere in the odd thousand miles of channels until they could elude us and return down river.

THE senhor added a shrewd question, speaking hollowly through the wrappings that he wound round his face against the mosquitoes as soon as we made our nightly camp.

"It is poor business policy," he mumbled with his customary attitude of a teacher instructing lesser intelligence, "to assume without sufficient proof that your rival may be doing this or that. Why do you all of you assume that those men are desperately hiding all the time? There are about a dozen of them, you say. Lawless men and fighters, with the clever business head of this Sylvestra man to lead them. Why should they run away from the two of you whom they have succeeded in robbing once already? They know nothing about this fleet-load of your savage friends."

A question not without acumen. Yet to one who understood, was it not perfectly clear?

"Senhor," I told him, "you fail for once to give credit to the product of your home town. It is true that those fellows do not know just how efficient a pursuit has been organized. But they do know that behind them is the Peloroxo, this Fire-Head from that God's Country of yours, who has already made some small stir in our rivers; and that with him am I, Theophilo. Is it not enough?"

But the senhor was in an irritable mood, as was not to be marveled at, and we did not blame him. To sit cramped in a *batelão* all day is not like reclining in an office chair of mahogany, and to live upon dried *pirarucu* fish and rice is not like the menu of a grill-room, and to sleep in a hammock slung

from the branches of a tree where the vampire bats hung is not like a feather bed. For us river men it was all very well. But for a gentleman of business who could find no extenuating allurement in the free life of the open trail, it was a sore trial for his temper. Wherefore he snapped back at me—

"If you're all so clever, it is a wonder that you don't send a few fast canoes ahead to scout and keep you informed."

A shrewd enough observation; and one to which there was no answer except a long exposition of the practical difficulties involved. But the Peloroxo came to my aid.

"No need, Dad," he said. "I telegraphed ahead from that last big *moloca* at which we stopped.

The senhor only grunted and remained silent. To him it was no impossible thing that his son should be sufficiently lacking in respect to jest with him. But the rest of us exclaimed in acclaim. We had heard it at intervals throughout the day as we had conducted our separate parties in our search; but no one of us had thought to attach its significance to ourselves. I turned to the Peloroxo and demanded of him what secret he was hiding up his sleeve now; and he said simply:

"I was able to persuade my *ipagé* to send along a *trocanawa* with me. So, now that we are getting into inhabited country, we may expect to hear at any moment."

And said we in chorus that, *sanctissimas*, he must indeed stand well with his *ipagé*. And so it turned out to be. Toward the end of the very next afternoon a light *uba* with one man in it came speeding down the river to meet us. His chief had sent him, he said, to tell the Kariwa Genipa—which means the Red-White Man—that the smoke *batelão* had passed up the channel two islands outside of the main bank, going slowly, and that the time of the passing had been when the sun was low on the day before; that this matter was known because several canoes followed the boat in order to pick up the bottles which every now and then floated in its wake and which were very valuable for many purposes.

Without exchange of words the same thought came to all of us river men. One day ahead, and going slow meant, of course, that they had no inkling of pursuit so close behind. It meant also one day's canoe journey, going fast. The steamer would tie up to the bank for the night. Well then?

Here was where my knowledge of twenty years on the upper rivers was useful.

"Look," I said, "they have taken that passage that curves to the north of those two islands and of a mess of smaller ones, because it is the main channel and is free from obstructions. The southern main shore, where the *moloca* is, is straight, and the channel was made for us by Saint Gabriel himself—to whom I shall donate a silver bar. It is narrow and sluggish. Too narrow for the steamer in some places; but ample for us, and the current against us will be slight. If we travel all night then—"

I looked around for confirmation at the faces of my friends. The three of them nodded slowly and with satisfaction.

"*Por graç' Deus*," said one. "We shall perhaps catch them with banked fires at their tie-up."

And the other two felicitated me on my knowledge. But as for the Peloroxo, he was spending no time in conversation. With the brusk disregard for the conventional pleasantries which you Americanos always exhibit in times of stress, he was giving swift orders.

The long drone of a *mambi* sounded as a signal to all the canoes, wherever they might be, to assemble as quickly as possible at the first point above, where the channels came together; and while we were still congratulating each other at our good fortune, the paddle men raised their chant of "mm-hm mm-ha" and dipped deep and strong.

At the meeting place even less time, if that were possible, was lost. Orders were passed to the assembled fleet to prepare their meal at once and to eat well, for a hard all night travel was before them.

To us *bateleros*, who knew what a fuss and pother was invariably made by our Indians when anything came up to disturb the routine which was their custom, it was a cheering sight to witness how readily these four hundred or so of canoe men responded to their instructions. As for preparing a meal, there was no foolish delay about that; no going ashore and gathering of wood and lighting of fires. These men simply took a measure of farina meal in a gourd, swilled it round with water dipped from the river and gulped it down. The hungrier ones tore up a slab of *pirarucu* fish and ate it as it was, raw; and then all

waved their paddles in the air to signify that they were ready. In less than fifteen minutes we were surrounded by a sea of waving paddles. Of course, I, too, have trained my own crew to do likewise when occasion demands. But four hundred odd—"

"*Picaro*," I said to the Peloroxo, "your *ipagé* must have given you a most excellent magic over these people."

And he:

"Sure. *Como não?* Did I not save his reputation once as a witch-doctor by giving him quinine against a fever epidemic? And besides, I gave him a most excellent bag of salt."

WHEREAT we were all able to laugh; for it is through a proper dealing with the witch-doctors that we wise ones among the river men are able to control our Indians. All but the senhor, who murmured again his disapproval of all this working hand in glove with heathen devil-devil men.

But the Peloroxo had the temerity to laugh at him and told him:

"Don't be provincial, Dad. As a business man and an employer of labor, you'll have to admit that there's something to a system which can get four hundred men to work from sunrise to sunset and then to jump when you tell them and work from sunset to sunrise."

Whereupon the senhor for once was silent. Here was an argument along business lines which could not but appeal to him.

No need to weary you with the details of that forced march—or how shall I say?—forced paddle by night. We took the narrow channel of the southern shore and proceeded like a battle fleet. Four abreast and paddles thumping on the gunwales at the outward twist like the roll of a drum. Never had such a fleet traversed the great river. As a matter of custom it is a very difficult thing to get the Indians of the upper rivers to travel at all by night, for fear of evil spirits of the water which lay in wait for night-farers. But it was clear to any Indian that spirits could not prevail against a fleet of a hundred and thirty-six big canoes with three or four men to each and with our two *batelãos* to lead and to bear the brunt of any ghostly attack. Though there was a tendency among those in the rear to crowd in on those in front; till we called a halt and the three of my friends went back and took places in the rear guard to lend the strength of the white men who are proof against evil spirits.

After that we progressed like launches with engines. Those were good Indians of the Peloroxo's from the Marauia. Fifty-three miles we made in that night's travel, which is something for a river man to understand. Through that southern channel and into the main channel again; and such progress did we make that the Peloroxo edged his *batelão* close and called across to me:

"*Por Deus*, Theophilo, if we keep this up we shall come upon them in the dark; and then we shall indeed have a bloodless victory, since it is the rule, it seems, for up-river men to sleep all night without a watch."

To which I could reply nothing except that, if I knew Diego and Esteban, to say nothing of some of the others on that boat, we would do well if we made a victory at all.

And just so it turned out. By the ill luck of the devil—or was it by the astuteness of our enemies—we did not catch up with the boat under cover of the dark, in which case who can tell what might have happened. Daybreak was well over the tree tops when we rounded a curve, and there, snuggled against the bank less than three miles ahead lay the steamer. Almost invisible under the tree shadows in the morning mist which hangs over the water from the heavy dew in this dry season; but the jungle eyes of those Indians could see like a vulture's. They pointed with their paddles and raised a shout, and without orders bent to put in a final spurt. The Peloroxo shouted with them and called across to me:

"*Allegrate amigo*, she is ours! Look at the funnel. They sleep on banked fires. It will take them an hour to raise steam; and by that time we shall have them well surrounded."

But I, straining my eyes, which are better than his by reason of less book study, was not so sanguine.

"Look closely, my friend," I called back to him. "I do not know yet; but from here this little river steamer looks like a fort."

And it was indeed so. Those were cunning scoundrels on that boat; and it now began to be clear to me why they had progressed so slowly. They had been stopping,

of course, to cut firewood. But, *sanctissimas*, what a store of firewood! And where do you think they had stored it?

On the lower deck in front of the boiler? Some of it, yes. Stacked in a parapet that stood all round, so that neither boiler nor engine could I see. And on the upper deck too. The forward part, where the wheel and steering apparatus stood ordinarily open to full view, was surrounded now by a veritable turret of firewood. The bow, both upper and lower, from where the cable passed to a tree on the shore was similarly protected; and at the after end, for no reason at all, except perhaps to offer a shelter from which to jeer at us, stood another fortification.

"Name of a thousand Beelzebubs!" I said to the Peloroxo. "That would be the work of that pock-marked bat of a João who boasts that he has deserted from three navies. This is a matter to be approached with artillery."

"Duck and rush in," was an advice which that Fire-Head had vaunted as a good rule of combat. But for once he hesitated. Nor did he laugh as was his wont in time of stress.

"Curse of the Father," he muttered. "If only we could have come upon them in the night! They might have been asleep."

And this time he didn't jest. But whatever might have been the case at night, it was clear that they didn't sleep now. Shouts came from the boat as the rest of our fleet rounded the curve and followed us in a straggling line, the speedier taking the lead. Calls and yells and clangings of furnace doors sounded from within that fortress of firewood. Yet we could see not a thing until presently the thin blue smoke that had been issuing from the funnel changed to a furious heavy black. And presently again, as we drew closer, a shot sounded from somewhere—we couldn't even see the flash—and a ball fell a hundred yards or so before us.

"We've got the range of them with rifles," muttered the Peloroxo. But that was all.

This was true, being a trick of my own inventing which I had imparted to him. For, though all the river carries the American rifles of Winchester .405, I have always taken the precaution to provide myself with a cartridge containing a one-third heavier load made by a German firm which is not so particular about the factor of safety as are your American regulations. A precaution which has tended to be my saving and the astonishment of my enemies on more than one hard occasion. But, pshaw, of what avail was a couple of hundred yards of extra range against a fortification?

OUR fleet bunched now like a flock of wary ducks, dipping paddles just sufficiently to stem the current out of range. At this hesitation on our part yells of ribald laughter came to us across the water. Too far to distinguish words; but I could well guess what those fellows were saying to me who had always exacted a stern respect from them. My gorge rose, and it was with difficulty that I was able to restrain myself from making some foolish demonstration. The Peloroxo was surveying his fleet of canoes and frowning ferociously. I knew what was in his mind.

"Would they follow if you were to give the order?" I asked him.

He nodded.

"I think so," he said. "For the *ipagé* made a strong magic for me. Yes, they would follow; and we could surely rush them and capture the boat—at a cost."

"How many would you lose?" I asked again.

But he shook his head and returned the question to me.

"How many do you think, *amigo*, against that fort?"

"Some fifty," said I, "including perhaps some of ourselves. As for me, I have stood their insults. I am ready. But the men are yours. You are their general. It is for you to weigh naked Indians against *tagua* nuts and to decide."

But he shuddered.

"God preserve me," he said. "I am no military person to arrogate to myself the authority of the Almighty to weigh the lives of men against a fort in order that somebody's honor and somebody else's profit may be preserved. No, my friend. We can not rush them."

"Well, what then?" said I, "while we stand here they are getting up steam."

His eyes were searching the shore as he muttered to himself:

"Perhaps from the jungle fringe—I have held that boat for nearly two weeks from behind a tree— And you and I together, *amigo*, have cut that cable with rifle balls."

And with the same breath he called an order, and paddles dipped in a fury of splashing to land us on the shore just below rifle range. As we sped, a thought came to him and he shouted over his shoulder again; and half of the canoes fell off to make a wide circuit and land on the upper side of the steamer with our friends who had rifles. At the last moment, just as we landed, he had the temerity to bark another order—to his father.

"You stay right here in the boat, Dad," he commanded; and together we rushed off through the undergrowth. Truly that youth had an audacity that was amazing in the face of his parent. With a hundred Indians to swing machetes before us it took us no time to come abreast of the boat; and as we did so we took advantage of all the cover afforded by the tree trunks. In that heavy growth we could approach close enough. There, not sixty feet away, the boat strained against its cable. Sounds of men furiously at work came to us; yet not a living soul could we see behind that breastwork of stacked firewood. The thing was a veritable armored battleship.

A hopeless looking situation; and we cursed in our helplessness. The Peloroxo, peering from behind his tree, growled that we might organize a sudden rush of machete men and almost jump on board, so closely did the boat snuggle against the bank and so thick were the trees right down to the water's edge. But at the same moment, as if reading the thought, some unseen person on board shouted a sudden warning. Followed a rattle of machinery and a clanking of chains, and the great rudder swung over and so set itself that the force of the current drew the boat away from the bank. Not far. Not more than twenty feet. Yet enough. To attempt to climb the side of an iron steamer from swimming in the water, even though it was no more than four feet to the lower deck, would have been more foolish than to charge upon it with canoes in the open. The Peloroxo was leaping behind his tree with excitement and baffled anger. And, as always in such circumstances, he swore with the inadequate oaths of the American. By the evil one and by the inferno he shouted; if he could only see a loophole!

Loopholes those fellows must have left, of course. But who can distinguish a loophole between the round logs of tree trunks? Yet, knowing what was in his mind, and having witnessed his speed with a pistol, I fired at random, hoping to draw fire in return. Which is just what happened. Two shots answered mine. One from the fortification, which was about the engine directly opposite to us, and one from the after turret. On the instant the Peloroxo's pistol crashed, and yells arose from both places.

"Thanks, *amigo*," he called to me, "that was well thought. That fellow at the end, I think, got no more than splinters from this angle. But I believe I got this fellow opposite here."

That was some small satisfaction. But, *carramba*, one cannot annihilate a ship's company through loopholes. Yet in connection with that word I had a thought and put it to the immediate test.

"Ohé," I called. "You of the ship's company. We have no quarrel with you. We know that you are coerced. If then you will—"

But yells of derision and laughter drowned out my words; followed by the immediate sounds of blows and a furious cursing; and a voice said—

"Listen to that Theophilo, the braggart of the upper rivers, trying to make an alliance with firemen and trimmers." And it was acclaimed with enthusiastic and ribald jeers.

That was Esteban, I knew; and I called:

"Listen, Esteban, you dung, I make you my promise now. It is simple. When you next see me you die." And in the silence I added, "And that goes for the next man whose voice I hear."

Whether any would have taken up the challenge, I can not say; for at that instant the Peloroxo's pistol crashed again and drew its yelp from some over-incautious peerer.

And firing broke out now from the upstream side where our friends were coming down. Some sort of opening must have been left in the front of the turret for the navigator to see through, and they were taking advantage of it. But it was long shooting and little could be hoped from it.

And in the midst of all the excitement I felt a tugging at my sleeve; and there was the Peloroxo's father, taking no cover at all and panting:

"Gimme a gun. By golly, somebody gimme a gun and show me how to shoot it."

I dragged him in behind a tree and shouted to his son to order him into shelter. But he, instead of coming to my aid, abetted

his crazy parent and shouted encouragement to him.

"Whoop it up, Dad," he yelled. "Take Theophilo's pistol and blaze away at anything you see. Keep him behind a tree, Theophilo. I'm going to try for that cable again."

WHO knows what might have happened? But we had given our bandits all the time that they needed. The engine began to clank and to snort, and the stern wheel churned up a flood of muddy water. While we stood helpless and raging, the boat slowly drew up on the cable. The tautness slacked. It bent and dipped in the water. Then the end slipped through the turret in the bow. Somebody had cut it from within. All actuated by unseen hands; as though some impregnable monster of the river, annoyed by our shooting, moved off of its own will. Snorting and hissing and clanking, the thing drew slowly away from the bank. With every half minute its steam pressure increased and its speed therewith. And then the yells of derision and the jeers came. All the foulness that is known to waterfront loafers belched from the bowels of that floating fortress; though with disguised voices; for I was unable to lay a mark against this man or that.

As the boat swung into mid-channel some of our canoes from above, without anybody's direction, bravely put out with some foolish notion of intercepting it. Those on board did not even trouble to waste a cartridge upon them. They simply rode them down and passed on leaving a trail of overturned canoes and swimmers; and once more hoots and laughter came to us.

Yet there was a small satisfaction to mitigate our shame. As the ship drew into the distance out of rifle shot, Esteban the Heretic, no less, jumped to the top of the fortification at the rear of the upper deck, and, standing in full view in the sunlight, called what I judged to be my name and made the sign with the joined hands to his front and his mouth that is amongst us of the rivers the greatest affront that one man may lay upon another.

Out of ordinary range he was. But a clear mark against the farther water. I spat upon the ball of one of my special cartridges and called upon the name of Saint Joaquim. Taking a broad sight upon his head, which I judged would plant the ball in his belly, I held my breath and pressed evenly upon the trigger.

It was the first good fortune that had come to me in many weeks, and I instantly promised to Saint Joaquim without reserve whatever the mission might most be in need of. There was no wind to deflect my ball, nor any glare to distort my sight. It was a good shot. Esteban, in the middle of his obscene gesture which he was repeating with gusto, dropped his hands and clutched at his middle. Then his knees slowly loosened and he fell quietly back into the turret.

That silenced the clamor of that boatload of bandits for a while; and on our own side, too, was an astonished silence, which the Peloroxo, after taking a long breath, broke.

"God be thanked," he said fervently.

"Yes," said I with satisfaction. "It was a good shot."

But he:

"Not for that," he said quickly. "God be thanked that it didn't come into their heads to steam off *down* river."

'Cremento, there was a thought that quenched my satisfaction. For it was immediately clear that with an armored fortress like that they could turn and ride down our fleet of canoes and so escape with ease and impunity at any moment that they might think of it. It was the grace of God that their minds were so full of the thought of flight that this other had not come to them immediately. Yet that might happen at any moment. How to guard against that danger? The Peloroxo remained frowning till at last—

"The Greeks," he said thoughtfully, "when they attacked larger ships, used fire-balls."

And for once I was able to join his father in acclaiming the learning that he had acquired in that home town of his. While I might not have thought of that out of my own head; nevertheless, given the idea, it was easy for me who knew the products of our upper rivers, to devise the application of it. I sent Indians to gather tree-cotton. Others to grind the nuts of the babassou palm between stones and to squeeze out the oil. In half a day's time every canoe was armed with a gourd containing a half dozen of fire-balls as fine as you could wish. That parapet of prepared

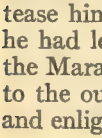
firewood was a direct invitation to such fire-balls. And so with an easier mind we prepared to take up our pursuit once more.

Yet the question remained open. Would it pay us, now that those robbers knew of our pursuit, to continue that pursuit? They could hide in a thousand back creeks and lagoons which would take months to explore; and they would be content to stay out as long as Dom Sylvestra continued to supply pay and funds. And as for Sylvestra, he must by this time be well frightened at the feud which he had stirred up, and he would surely pay them to exert every artifice to evade us and to avoid a reckoning, for he was rich.

As for me, I was willing to continue the hunt for all time. But decision rested with the Peloroxo; for his share in the *tagua* cargo was twice as great as mine. His reply to the question was after my own heart. His eyes clouded and his red brows met in a frown. Then his big fists opened and he laughed.

"If Sylvestra is rich enough to keep his gang out for a year, so much the better. There will be so much the greater indemnity to be extracted from him."

So our pursuit continued, though with greater ease now; for Indian settlements were becoming more frequent and the "telegraph" brought us swift and unerring information. The senhor was much mystified by this telegraph which sent men down from ahead of us to meet us with information of which way to follow the pursuit; and for a time his son had the effrontery to tease him, ascribing it to witchcraft which he had learnt from his friend, the *ipagé* of the Marauia. Yet at the last he responded to the outraged entreaties of the rest of us and enlightened him.



"SIGNAL drums," he told him the simple explanation. "They're scattered along the shore settlements at intervals, and certain men who know the code can relay messages for tremendous distances. *Trocans*, the drums are called; and the signalers, *trocanawas*. My *ipagé* sent one of them along with me."

And the senhor, with unshakable comparison to his home ground—thought this time not unfavorable—

"By golly, that's just like the constable back home reporting on a stolen automobile."

And so the jungle telegraph speeded us in our pursuit with great saving of time in that whole stretches of side creeks and lagoons could be left unexplored as soon as the news came that the steamer had been sighted beyond. And indeed, our quarry seemed now to run like frightened rats, too panicky to stop and investigate any side sewer. Straight and fast they steamed up river; till I said to myself:

"*Dientro*, can it be possible that they are crazy enough to attempt the forty miles of fast water at São Gabriel?" And I told the others. "Look now. Here we are coming into my country. Above the São Gabriel I operate; and even below I am not without influence. Chiefs and whole villages will turn out to my call. So let us signal to Camanaos, the *sitio* just below the rapids, and my friend there will collect an army of blow-gun men."

Which we did. And two days later a fleet of thirty-eight canoes met us. Kubbeos they were. Tall, fierce fellows, each one of whom could fetch down a parrot at sixty feet with a blow-gun dart. Beyond the rapids I could raise a thousand more like them in two days. Looking round at our combined forces, I laughed and said to the Peloroxo:

"*Amigo*," I said. "Look what we can do, you and I, with a proper handling of men. Let us here found a kingdom."

And he laughed too and said that that would be a glorious adventure indeed. But before talking of founding a kingdom let us first find our boat. For since those Kubbeos had come from above and we from below—

Celestes, that was a disquieting thought. Where indeed was the boat? A thing like that could not disappear. Unless, as the senhor put it pithily:

"I can never follow the reasoning of you fellows. If you can make use of this so convenient telegraph of the jungle, why can't your business rivals do the same? Why shouldn't they know that this murderous gang was coming from above and so have hidden somewhere?"

But I told him:

"Senhor, you do not understand. This jungle telegraph is no public service corporation. It is a very secret thing among the Indians. In all the upper rivers there

are perhaps two white men who stand so with the witch-doctors that they can make use of it—and we are both here. Of all the white men who trade the upper rivers there are perhaps three whom the jungle Indians will serve willingly—and the third, believe me, is not on that steamboat. Furthermore, by this time all the river knows that Peloroxo the Fire-Head and Theophilo of the upper rivers have a war with those pirates—and no man in all the rivers will willingly enter that war on the wrong side."

Whereupon he so far forgot to extol his home town that he said that if he could control a similar condition for conducting business his factory would buck the Standard Oil.

And my contention was borne out within the day. An Indian came in an *uba* and reported that, while he had seen no steamboat, he had seen smoke rising in the air from the Curi-Cuiary River; and since no Indians lived on this river, therefore strange men must be there.

"Oho," said I, "those rats who know the river know that at São Gabriel the name of Theophilo commands friends; and they have heard the signal-drumming and have guessed. So rather than be caught above by blow-gun men and below by us, they have scurried into this last sewer that was left to them. *Então bom;* this will be the end!"

For, while nobody knew very much about this Curi-Cuiary river—since there were no Indians and therefore no trade—I knew this: That it came in on the southern side about half a day's journey up and that its mouth was about half a mile wide and that its current was slow and sluggish. Which in turn was the explanation of why no Indians lived there. For the country back there must be so low-lying and flat that there would be nothing but swamps, with no rising ground to support even a colony of fish-eating Indians.

So we laughed. A journey into the swamps of a half submerged jungle was no very pleasant thing to contemplate. Yet we knew that here our *batelãos* and canoes would be an advantage, and that when we had eventually run that steamboat on to the farthest point of mud, we would devise some means of subduing the fort.

Accordingly up the Curi-Cuiary we went, an allied fleet of a hundred and fifty strong; and swampy enough it proved to be, spreading into wide lagoons and winding channels and flood lands that stretched back amongst the growing trees for God knew how many miles.

Steamy hot country, and foully malarious. A paradise for all the insects of the earth. Easy country to get lost and die in, you would say. But would you laugh if I were to tell you that a trail is easy to follow in still water? Believe me, it is so. For the dead things that lie in that hot, stagnant water and the floating growths and scum, when pushed aside by a body no wider than a canoe, leave a trail that will last for days before they come together again.

So by this trail we followed our quarry—to say nothing of the trail that they willfully left behind them. Refuse and ashes and such. Which made me wonder; for I gave credit to some of those fellows at least for being good jungle men and no fools. The Peloroxo laughed with a hard mouth and told me a gringo saying to the effect that a stern chase was a long one. And so it was with us.

SANCTA MAE, what an endless river that proved to be! This way we wound and that; sometimes losing the trail in a body of clear water; sometimes up against a blank wall of greenery. But our swift canoes, as busy as the mosquitoes themselves, would always nose out the trail again; and the wall would prove to be no more than a hanging curtain of lianas which could be pushed through to clear water once more. Nearly a hundred miles we pushed our way into that foul creek till I began to imagine that we must be beyond the vague border line that separates us from Colombia and to wonder whether those fellows might have some plan of getting out of Brazilian jurisdiction—as if that would be any sort of protection to them to get into the supposed sphere of Colombian law. The current, such as it was, ceased to exist at all, and we traveled dead water in company with caimans and anacondas and water monitors and such beasts as thrive amongst dead things; and still the channel gave no indication of coming to an end.

And then at a narrow place we came to a blockade. Huge trees felled from either side and firmly lodged in the mud. Cunningly done; for while canoes, and even

thirty foot *batelãos* can be unloaded and dragged pulley-hauley over or around any obstruction, time and a vast amount of sweating labor are necessary. So, while we cursed, we yet congratulated one another.

"They are preparing for their last desperate stand," we told each other. And we surmounted that barrier with enthusiasm. And then, a little farther, we came to another; and the whole process of unloading into a swamp and hauling around had to be recommenced.

It was while we were thus engaged with less of enthusiasm and more of cursing than before that—*miravel*—a brace of canoes with a half dozen Indians came from the other side. A pleasing surprize it was to find Indians this far up this uninhabited river, and I had them brought immediately before me to question them about our elusive steamer.

"Assuredly," they said,"the smoke *batelão* had gone—"

But at their first words the pleasant surprize of their meeting was changed into consternation.

"*Picaro!*" I cried out. "But you are Putumayos!"

"Assuredly," said they again.

"But, name of the ——," said I, "how do you come to be at the headwaters of the Curi-Cuiary, which, if anything, is Kubbeo country?"

And they, looking amazed, answered with deference:

"The *kariwa* knows all things. But—let him not be offended—this is not the headwater of that river of which we have never heard the name; but it is the headwater of the Mururi River where we live."

"You talk like fools," I cried with exasperation. "We have just come up the Curi-Cuiary; while this Mururi river, I know it. It is a little river flowing *south* into the Yapurá."

Yet even as I said it and before they had time to agree that it was surely so, I knew what foul mischance we had met with. That flood country! That lack of current! Of course it was possible! Just like the Casiquiari which connects the Rio Négro with the Orinoco. I might almost have guessed some such thing from the careless disregard of hiding with which our enemies had been traveling all this while.

You must understand, senhor, that the three great northern tributaries of the Amazon, the Rio Négro, the Yapurá, and the Putumayo, all flow approximately west to east at a distance of sometimes as close as two hundred miles to one another; and that the general elevation of this Amazon basin, even so far from the sea, is not more than five hundred feet above sea level. So that the dividing line between these drainage systems is almost imperceptible. I personally know of many places where a short carry of a few miles will transfer one from a southern creek tributary of one into a northern creek tributary of another. But of this common ancestry of these two creeks in this deserted swamp I had known nothing. Yet what could be simpler.

That must have been Diego of the Dog-Ears who had that knowledge. In some back creek wandering of his upon some nefarious business or other he must have found this out and had saved the knowledge for some possible future eventuality.

So here was where they had been aiming for so confidently all the while that we, poor fools, had thought that we were "bottling" them in the neck of the São Gabriel. It was foolish even to hope that the passage might have been too narrow in some place. Yet I questioned the Indians quickly; and they but confirmed what I already knew.

"Yes, four days ago the smoke *batelão* had passed their village; and that was why they, astonished at its appearance, had ventured up this far into this noisome place of swamps and reptiles.

So there we were. Marooned in the central swamp of nowhere, while our quarry must be by this time gaily entering the Yapurá. It was a situation that was hopeless enough. How could we continue to pursue with canoes a steamer that was on its unobstructed way to the Amazon river? But the Peloroxo snapped.

"Tell us about this Yapurá, Theophilo. I don't know anything about it."

So I told them, drawing a map with my knife-point on the side of my *batelao*.

"This Mururi creek, I have never been up it, for it is the counterpart of this Curi-Cuiary, sluggish and uninhabited. I know only that it enters the Yapurá at a place where there is a Putumayo *moloca* called Xingat. The Yapurá flows then easterly through very flat country, and presently it inundates, rather than flows, into the Amazon. At Fonte Boa it begins, and then

through a hundred channels covering a distance of some three hundred miles, it joins the Father of Waters. At Anaman is the last of the channels; and then some four or five days' journey further comes the Rio Négro; and eighty miles up the Négro again, of course, is Manaos."

And I added furthermore.

"Look! This is the last thing that can now be done by us. Those channels of the Yapurá, by very reason of their being so many, are shallow and tricky. A steamboat even of shallow draught will have to go carefully. So it is my judgment that it will take our pirates, say nine or ten days more to reach Manaos. We can reach—if indeed this accursed channel does go through—we can reach Fonte Boa in plenty of time. At Fonte Boa is a telegraph office of the Companha Amazonense; and from there we can telegraph to friends in Manaos who may be able to make a claim through the law courts and may so hold the cargo until we can arrive."

BUT the Peloroxo scowled ferociously and opened and closed his great fists and said that, no, he was opposed to that plan for the one reason that we had no means of knowing just how much power our friends in Manaos might have with the law courts; and for the other very true reason that this was our fight and that if we could not show the upper river, where there was no law, that we could with our own hands hold our own, we might as well give up doing business in the upper rivers. And the senhor, his father, astonished us all by agreeing with him and saying that, by the golly, now that he had seen something of the kind of men who lived in the upper rivers he was convinced that it was so.

"To the —— with the law," said he. "Go on and win your own fight, son."

The Peloroxo grinned in the very face of his father and towards me he closed one eye, and he said:

"Look now, *amigo*. These men, our fleet of naked savages, can never be driven to go any nearer to civilization than Santa Isabel. But if I can pick from among them as many as sixteen strong paddle-men, sufficient to relay our *batelão* crews so that we can travel day and night, and if by the authority of my *ipagé* I can persuade them to go—tell me, you who know the river currents of the Négro, in how many days can we reach Manaos?"

And I thought awhile, going over the route of the shortest channels and the swiftest currents in my mind with care, and—

"*Carramba*," I said, "if we meet with no accident we can make it in maybe nine or ten days."

"Good!" he shouted. "Time enough; and with our friends here, men enough, if I can get paddles enough."

There spoke the spirit of his indomitable grandfathers. We were all swept into the whirlpool of his enthusiasm.

"Brava!" I cried, "let us get back out of this accursed swamp and let the race begin."

WHAT need to tell of the wearisome details of that race? With no channels to explore and with a straight road before us and with the river currents to help, we got out of that foul morass and down to Santa Isabel—a travel that had taken us two weeks to come up—in four and a half days, leaving some five and a half, if my calculation was correct, to reach Manaos to meet those brigands.

At Santa Isabel the Peloroxo sent his fleet home, having first persuaded sixteen stout fellows to augment our paddle-men, promising them a whole five-pound bag of salt apiece if they would brave the terrors of civilization. And then my mind began to be easy. In five and a half days and nights it could be done; though that was almost steamer time. Easy in mind though not in body; for, by the saints' trials, that was a wearisome travel by reason of so many men being cramped up together in each *batelão*.

But we reached Manaos with time and time to spare. And we lay off on the farther shore in order that no man might know of our presence, and some friend, perhaps, of Dom Sylvestra's, might telegraph a warning to some point lower down. Thomas, one of my friends, went ashore and made discreet inquiries and he learned that nobody knew anything about the steamer; except that the news had come down that we had chased it up river, and the owners who had chartered it to Dom Sylvestra were wringing their hands and had taken out injunctions against his business and what-not, and were preparing to levy upon him God knows what costs and penalties.

So the race, at least, was won. Remained now the fight. And it would surely be a fight, I told the Peloroxo. For while we may have disposed of some three or four of our enemies in that first meeting, we were but five white men and the senhor, who could hardly be counted as an effective; and it was certain that at least twice our number of those bandits must be left. Hard men all, accustomed to fighting under all sorts of conditions.

But the Peloroxo grinned slyly at his father and stated a profound maxim that was the very opposite of his own character—that it was poor business policy to fight with one's adversary when one could catch him napping and so outwit him. To which his father said—

"Now you're talking, son."

And when I agreed heartily with him and asked only how we were to catch those wily bandits napping, that young ruffian grinned again with malice and said that he did not know; but that it ought not to be difficult to do so since Theophilo had once been caught in just such a position. And he added then soberly what indeed was true—that he had observed among us river men, that while we displayed all the craft of hunting jaguars when we were out on the trail, we relaxed and were as careless as jaguars which would lie out on a limb in the sun as soon as we thought ourselves to be safe.

"Therefore," said he. "Since those fellows without any manner of doubt feel sure that they have outwitted us and outdistanced us, who knows what opportunity they may leave open?"

And so indeed it turned out. We went on down the Rio Négro to its meeting with the Amazon, and there at the turning point, where we knew that the steamer would pass close to the shore, we decided to wait in ambush, knowing that we would be free from interference. And the same day toward dusk the steamer made its appearance, in very truth relaxed and careless. No strong fortress was it now as when we had seen it last. The palisades of firewood had been gratefully burned up and the boat wheezed and groaned upstream, making a poor showing of it.

Afterward we learned that the complete ship's company had insisted upon disembarking at Anaman, refusing to come into Manaos and to be branded as associates of that gang against the time of reckoning with the Peloroxo and myself. But at the time we wondered only at the mishandling of the boat and thought that they must be celebrating the finale of their grand coup by getting drunk in advance. The whole company of us looked at one another on the same instant and all asked the same question.

"They will tie up for the night?"

And I answered:

"Surely. They will tie up at that place called Last Stage, not three miles above here where all steamers tie. For it is only *bateleros* who go careering about the rivers at night."

"Let her go," said the Peloroxo. "For it is my luck to capture steamers at night."

And so we did. The boat rammed the bank so that we, three miles below, heard the clang and clatter of the shock; and then with much confusion and inexpert handling, the cable was got ashore and fastened round the tree stump that had been cut to serve that purpose. Before the assembled company I promised a donation to the Little Fathers of Saint Joseph; and we lay quiet then with as much patience as we could muster till the darkness came and the general confusion died down and only the ships' lanterns remained burning.

Not that we had any hope of taking the ship by surprize, with all hands asleep; for the Peloroxo very wisely said that a man who would count on that sort of luck twice would be a fool. His plan this time was different; and since he had shown himself to have a shrewd head for planning, I was content to agree with him.

So when we judged that things were sufficiently quiet we approached the ship without any concealment. On the contrary, with a splashing of paddles and with shouts and laughter. And our *batelãos* bumped into the ship's side clumsily and Thomas, whose voice was unknown to any of the gang, called out:

"Ohé, camarada. Is this the river boat *Vasco Nunez?* We come to visit our friends Paolo and Bertolome."

Two figures arose from the bow on the lower deck and shouted angrily that this was not the *Vasco Nunez;* and while one took down the lantern from its hook, the other came grumbling to tell us to sheer off; that nobody on board knew us nor wanted to know us. In order to tell us the more

forcibly he came down to the middle of the ship; and met—me.

"Hola, who is this?" he growled; and with that I knew the voice for one, Degas.

"Amigo," said I gently as I took him by the throat, "you lie, as always. You know me very well indeed and shall know me better to your cost."

And while the fellow yet twisted speechless in my grasp, the other hurried up with the lantern.

"THOUSANDS of devils!" he exclaimed and swiftly raised the light to my face.

And, *carramba*, he stood there for a moment as speechless as this Degas into whose windpipe my two thumbs pressed. Such were the swift expressions of amazement and incredulity and then alarm which distorted his countenance that I, though I struggled yet with my man, had to laugh out loud. And then, just as he opened his mouth to shout, a big red hand reached out from the dark shadow of the engine house and took the lantern from his grasp and a big red fist slammed out and struck him on the side of the neck under his ear with a sound of a butcher chopping meat.

He dropped as if the fist had been a butcher's cleaver. But the unprincipled dog had picked up some iron implement as he came, and it fell to the iron deck with him with a terrible clatter.

The Peloroxo cursed softly after the manner of the gringos, yet with a note of extraordinary cheerfulness in his voice; and then, as we slid our two men into the hands of our friends who passed them over the side to our waiting Indians, he warned quickly:

"Look out for the companion-ladder. Some one is moving above."

Thanks to the small size of the boat, there was but one ladder from the upper deck to the lower. We reached it as half a man's body and, above him, a pair of feet appeared. It is queer how one will recognize sometimes in a flash little matters which have never before been noticed. For me there was no hesitation. I knew the half body in an instant for Diego of the Dog-Ears. I drew back my fist and waited. Then as his feet touched the deck:

"Diego, my ancient enemy, receive this, my greeting," I said; and I struck as the Peloroxo had done.

But the art of striking with the fist as you gringos do does not come easily to us of the South. I struck indeed, and Diego fell with blood spurting from his cheek. But he was not senseless at one stroke. He had time to scream my name once in affright before I fell upon him and put my thumbs to his throat.

Like an officer of a ship relaying to another the call of one who shoots the sun, the other man who was yet descending yelled my name and leaped straight up into the air. But the Peloroxo's great arm shot out again and snatched him out of mid-air by the ankle, and down he tumbled upon my back, all but knocking the wind from my belly.

"Ugh!" I groaned. "Release me."

And in the same instant, in some miraculous manner, all with the same hand while the other still held the ship's lantern, the Peloroxo contrived to up-end the fellow, release him, and hit him before he could gain his balance to draw pistol or knife.

"That makes four," he said methodically. "Slide 'em over and get ready to slam the next."

But there was no disposition now on the part of any of those others to come down into the dark pit of the companion-ladder. Instead, there were stampings and runnings, and one cried to another:

"In ——'s name, have a care! It is that —— of a Theophilo." And then came a voice—

"I shoot point blank at the first head that comes up."

And I answered—

"And I, point blank at the first belly that comes down."

So there we stood at a deadlock. We in command of the lower deck and they in command of the upper with a ladder impregnable to both sides between us. While I held my position at the ladder with my pistol, the others with the lantern made a swift survey of the lower deck to see that no other member of the gang lurked in some dark corner. But only the two watchmen had been there. The rest, by the grace of God, had slept in their hammocks above. We were safe for the time being; though hardly in command of the situation; for it is an uncomfortable thing to be beneath while one's enemies are above.

The Peloroxo laughed in the dark.

"It is a business axiom," he said, "that when a situation is intolerable it should be changed as swiftly as possible. So—"

"*Picarol*" said I. "What mad thing do you propose to do now?"

"A simple thing, old grumbler," he muttered. "It is clear that they must all have congregated at the head of the ladder here, waiting for foolish heads to come up and be shot at. Let the rest of you hold the ladder then; and I will climb up by the bow at some place and drive them down, and as they come, you sock 'em."

And before we could hold him he had disappeared.

"*Quê, Diabo!*" I said in consternation, "he is drunk with the spirit of his grandfathers. Those men are killers, all. How can he alone drive them down?"

But I might have known that he was not without a plan. As we waited tense in the dark, listening to the whisperings and shufflings of those above, his voice called from the darkness of the bow:

"*Em cima os maos!* Put 'em up there. You with the lantern, if you drop it I shoot before it touches the deck."

At that there was a chorus of yells from above and the sound of men leaping this way and that. Two or three pistol shots crashed; and from the bow another; and a man screamed once and a heavy splash sounded over the side.

"Fat-heads," came the Peloroxo's voice coolly. "You can't see me."

And at that I had a thought.

"*Ohê,* above there," I called, "that is the Peloroxo speaking. And those of you who have never heard his voice have at least heard of his pistol. It will be better for you, then, to come down to us who sometimes miss."

There followed a silence, no man wishing to raise his voice and advertise his position. Then soft calls to one another and mutterings. Then a voice from what I judged to be the shelter of the cabin:

"If we agree to avoid a fight in which some of you, too, will surely die, what terms will you discuss, Theophilo?"

"No terms," snapped the Peloroxo's voice from the bow. "And there will be no fight. The man with the lantern stands where he is at the head of the ladder and the rest of you go down one by one."

Silence again, and no man moved. Then the Peloroxo again:

"I count ten, and then I shoot first at the shadow in the shadow of the life-boat."

This time only a short silence, and then a quick shuffling, and feet appeared at the head of the ladder.

"THROW down your pistol first," I commanded.

"But I have no pistol," whined the man. "I come peaceably."

And he came down; and it was none other than Dom Sylvestra; but so thin was his body and so flea-bitten was his tender skin from his exposure in our up river country that I scarcely recognized him for the pompous man of rich business who used to scorn us river men in the cafés. I fell upon him and embraced him with both arms.

"*Amigissimo,*" I told him, "you can with difficulty believe how glad we are to see you." And I gave him the greeting of the rougher element among the *bateleros* when they indulge in horse-play—a buffet pretending to be a fond slap in the back but landing on the side of the head, which hurled him into the arms of Thomas, who greeted him likewise and staggered him over into the arms of our paddle-men who in turn bound him and stuffed him into the bilge with the other four.

"Next!" I called.

And at the prolonged hesitation—"Next!" said the Peloroxo's even voice from the bow with cold menace; and feet appeared quickly on the step.

"Pistol and knife first," I ordered.

And without more ado they dropped and the man followed. Him, we treated the same as Sylvestra—though perhaps a trifle more roughly, since he was one of the river rats, a younger man and more inured to roughness—and we passed him over the side. And so on with a pleasing regularity. Urged by that cold voice behind the unseen pistol in the bow, they came one after the other. Till we had nine in all, the last being the man with the lantern.

"This seems to be all," I called to the Peloroxo. And his voice called back:

"Good. I am coming down the length of the ship now; and if I hear a sound or see a shadow move I shoot without further question."

At that there was a swift scuffle and a knife dropped quickly down and feet followed hurriedly. This one was a snake of a man whom we called Jararaca, the black water-viper, and who was feared among his associates on account of his poisonous vindictiveness. Him I beat about the head

till his fangs rattled for his intended treachery and then passed him limp to the Indians. Then presently the Peloroxo descended amongst us, laughing as though he had not just staked his life against death holding the odds.

"Come my friends," he said. "Let us go up and rout out a banquet of the ship's food. I am sick of living on stinking *pirarucu* and rice and chili peppers."

But I said:

"Wait a moment, *amigo*. I go first to make sure that our friends are safely bound and properly stowed. For Theophilo does not be surprized twice."

AND so we gathered presently on the upper deck and ransacked the ship's stores and laid out for ourselves a most prodigal meal of the best that the ship possessed—pink salmon out of cans and bacon and lemonade. And we drank and smoked with gusto and great hilarity. And when we sat back at the last with full bellies and in comfort for the first time in many weeks, the senhor, the Peloroxo's father, must needs stand up and deliver a formal speech after the manner of you gringos when you have banqueted.

He recounted at great length the whole of our adventure together—as if we were not well aware of it—and he made compliments to all of us that made us uneasy; and he turned then to his son and made a speech all over again all about the excellence of his upbringing and the sterling teachings of that good preceptor of the home town which had been the groundwork that had rendered all our victory possible. The most of it was boring in its platitudes; but this he said which I remember well:

"Son," he said, "you have done well. I feel, in fact, that your brothers, with all their business training in the factory could not have done any better. I had hoped to fit you in as a strong link in our family chain. But I have to confess I feel that you would not fit in to any subordinate position. You have grown in this wide open unsettled country to be a man such as my father was when he took the trail out to our wide open unsettled plains. I am afraid that you would be a most disturbing element in our settled ways of business."

And the son said simply in reply:

"Guess you're right, Dad. I belong in the wide open life. I'd die in the family factory."

And then they both shook hands for a full minute, saying nothing. Yet I felt that more understanding passed through that handshake than could have been conveyed in another whole speech. None the less the situation was embarrassing. Till I, to change it, raised the question of what we were going to do now with our captured ship and its bandit crew. This suggestion came and that, imposing fines and penalties and what-not. But the Peloroxo said:

"Pshaw! What use to talk of fines and so on? What can we take from those river rats who have nothing? As for Sylvestra—what fine can we impose that we could ever collect, once that he is entrenched behind the protection of the law in Manaos City? Let the owners of this steamer collect from him as much as they can through the authority of the law courts—which I think will be a plenty. As for us, we have our cargo of *tagua* safe; and that is all we can hope to get."

But at that there was an immediate outcry.

"What? Are those scoundrels to go without punishment?"

The Peloroxo grinned.

"We can turn them over to the law for brigandage," he suggested.

But at that the outcry was even greater. What had we river men to do with the law? And what satisfaction would it be to us to know that those fellows were locked up in a jail for a year or two? So the Peloroxo grinned again and said:

"In the morning maybe I shall have a plan. Let us now go to sleep in these luxurious hammocks slung from the stanchions where the breeze is coolest."

Of course I knew that he had a plan in mind already. But such was his way—to tease and to laugh at all of us. And so I, having made sure again that our prisoners were secure and very uncomfortable, turned in and slept with an easy mind.

IN THE morning, then, we made another famous meal of the ship's dainties and then called for our prisoners to be lined up before us—an even ten of as bedraggled and frightened looking bravos as any one could wish to see. Then the Peloroxo said with a sober face:

"Look, this is my plan; and let us see whether we do not all agree. First, since our Indians have worked very hard and

faithfully, let us give them a treat and let them all ride to Manaos in this steamer. Any good *batelero* can run a river steamer; so let our three friends here with my father go on and announce our coming to Manaos City. You and I, *amigo* Theophilo, will follow in our own *batelãos*."

"But, *Picaro*," said I, "if our men all ride in the steamer how shall we—?"

"Yes," he interrupted with a sober face and with an even voice. "We shall miss our good Indian paddle-men. These river rats, I fear me, will be very inexpert, and I feel that they will be also unwilling, since they will consider it derogatory. And five apiece, too, will be a very short crew for heavy *batelãos* like ours. I am afraid they will find it very hard. Yet—" the bantering tone left him and his voice became as hard as his eyes and his mouth and his whole face— "and yet, *amigo* Theophilo, I think that you and I can perhaps make paddle-men out of them between here and Manaos. And it will be a novelty, will it not, for two river men to arrive in Manaos City with a crew of *blancos* apiece, instead of Indians, to paddle their boats? A novelty which the river will remember for a long time, no?"

I leaped up and embraced him as I shouted my acclaim. And so did each of the others in turn. There could be no dissent to a plan of such complete justice towards those pirates and of warning to all the rest of the river that Peloroxo and Theophilo were up river men whose business were best left alone.

As for the rest. You know yourself, senhor, how all Manaos City lined up at the dock front to witness our coming and how the story is still going round in the cafés about those would-be bad *blancos* who came into town doing the work of naked Indians.

So that is how I come to offer you this cargo of the very finest *tagua* at the very low price of two and a half *milreis*. And you mustn't think, senhor, that I have no other market. For, if I only care to wait a little, the last words of the senhor, the Peloroxo's father, were that, since in family unity was strength, the business should be kept in the family. So his factory in the home town would open up a side line for the manufacture of *tagua* products and would very shortly be in a position to absorb our whole output.

But the Peloroxo and I, we do not wish to waste time over this little matter. The city stifles us, and we are anxious to be off in our own water again, where the river breeze blows cool on the cheek to the thump of the paddles and where—who knows—some new thing may be waiting round the first next corner.

As the Peloroxo quotes out of his religious training of the home town—

"The Red Gods call us out and we must go."

But as for me, I do not know what he means. Nor care I—so long as we go.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

CHIGGERS. The description here given—except for the magnifying-glass—corresponds with memories of "jiggers" in Kansas in my 'teens. If they aren't the same animal, they ought to be. The main facts I recall are that they burrowed, that you couldn't see them, that the itching was maddening and that they seemed particularly partial to millet as a place to lie in ambush.

The Miraflores Club,
Pedro Miguel, Canal Zone.

COMRADES—In the issue of Aug. 20th, Tracy Richardson remarks that in fifteen years in the tropics he has never seen a "Chigger" or "Red bug.' No doubt he hasn't, unless he used a magnifying glass.

I am the proud and happy (*sic*) possessor of a dozen or so at the moment of writing, and have had them many a time and oft in the last ten years and over, but never saw one myself until recently, when I had the curiosity to use a magnifier. Previously, like the man that sat on the cat, I knew it was there, although I couldn't see it.

The Chigger, or Red Bug, or Chigoe, is almost microscopic, can just be seen in a good light when on a contrastingly-colored surface, as on white paper. It is a blood-red color, very active, shaped very much like a tick or garrapata—that is, oblong body and six legs, very small head at one end. It gets on, quickly finds a suitable place and digs itself in, literally burying itself under the skin. There it presently dies, festers, causes a swelling and considerable pain, the eruption breaks, exuding a serum or pus, often forming a persistent running sore. Finally it heals, leaving a pit or scar resembling smallpox, but as these occur on the legs the disfigurement is not important.

There seems to be no effective remedy except to smear kerosene oil or grease on the skin before the mite buries itself. After the infection sets in all treatment is palliative, designed to relieve the swelling and disinfect the wound. It heals about as soon if left entirely alone. Various sulfur and moth-balls

formulas are favored, but have only slight efficacy. Potassium permanganate might be effective.

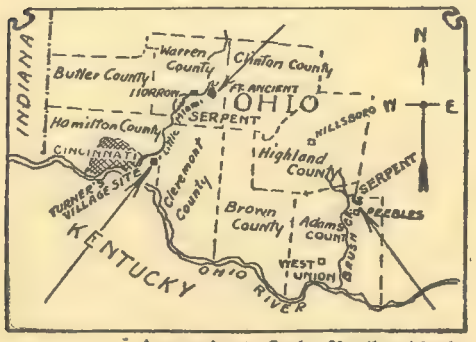
The Panama natives of the mountain regions use the juice of the "Serillo," which is botanically unknown—a large tree growing in the *altos sierras*, not to be confused with the Serillo of Cuba; and in the lowlands they use the juice of "Malva"—*Malachra Capitata*, Linn., which is mildly effective against all insect poisons.

While about it, I would like to put in a suggestion that the buddies use the botanical names of trees and plants wherever they can, because local names are almost always confusing, being applied to totally different things in several regions. Take "Gopher," which is a snake in one region, a tortoise in another and a rodent animal in a third, all within our ever-blessed United States. (No, it has no *botanical* name—merely cited it as an illustration.) *Hasta luego*—E. St. Clair Clayton.

MOST of us have heard of the famous serpent mounds in Ohio and know that various theories have been advanced to account for these huge and very ancient monuments. A most interesting theory is here advanced by John Brown Jewett, author of "Kultur in North American History," "Tales of the Miami Country," etc., and should make scientists who have given major consideration to linguistic evidence test once more the soundness of their conclusions.

New Town, Ohio.

The two serpent-mounds of Ohio, the most noted serpent-effigies in the world, are of the same length, each about a quarter of a mile long. They lie about fifty miles apart, headed toward each other. The head of one rests on a high rocky promontory of Brush Creek, almost directly over the water. The head of the other has been washed away by the little Miami's current, or that of a tributary creek which now flows at the foot of the glacial terrace on which the body of the serpent rests. The river itself seems to have flowed at the foot of the terrace at one time, or where the foot of the terrace would have been before sliced off by freshets, so the probability is that the head of this effigy, too, overlooked the water.



Approximate Scale, 20 miles=1 inch

Little Miami Serpent on farm of Edward Spence. Brush Creek Serpent in "Serpent Mound Park," owned by the State of Ohio

WHEN Father Marquette was on the Mississippi in 1672, near the present site of Alton, Illinois, he saw a pair of grotesque figures carved and painted on the face of a high rock at the eastern side of the river. Each figure had a head and horns like a deer's or an elk's, feet like a bear's, "a body covered with scales, and a tail so long that it passed entirely round the body, over the head and between the legs, ending like that of a fish." The position given these monsters on the side of the rock, of course, was such that their faces, "something like the face of a man," were directly over the water.

These carved and painted figures called "The Piasa" by the Illini tribe, were near the great Cahokia group of pyramid-mounds, the largest of which has a base covering several acres; the serpent-mound on the Little Miami, in Ohio, is but a few miles below Fort Ancient, "the greatest pre-historic earthwork in the Mississippi Basin;" the serpent-mound of Brush Creek is about half-way between the village-sites of the Little Miami and those of the Scioto in which serpent-effigies cut from stone or mica, and bone-carvings of serpent-symbols, some with the horned-head and bear's-feet attachments of the Illinois rock-carving, have been found.

AT THESE and at some of the other village-sites in Ohio, marked by large earthworks, graded ways leading from the earth-walled inclosures toward an adjacent river or smaller stream constitute a prominent feature of the construction. These graded passages, certainly not needed by the inhabitants for mere convenience in obtaining water for drinking purposes, but essential to the dignified march of grave ceremonial processions, reveal more of the mode of worship silently expressed in the overlooking positions given to the earthen or carved likenesses of the Water-God. From the jaws of the Brush Creek serpent, from the top of the Mississippi rock above the head of the Piasa, and from the edge of the bluff on which the head of the Little Miami serpent doubtless once rested, the body of a sacrificed human victim could be hurled down to the Invisible Presence that dwelt in the silent stream.

The fearful extent to which this rite was practised by the people "whose center was in south-western Ohio, and whose remains are found as far north as Grand Rapids, Michigan, as far west as Naples, Illinois, and as far south as Franklin, central Tennessee," was remembered by many of the tribes whom the first white explorers found inhabiting the borders or the interior of the great district above outlined by the Peabody Museum. The Lenape, anciently residents of Michigan and Indiana, recalled the "mighty snake" or water-monster who tried to destroy their forefathers with "a rushing water;" the Senecas yet tell of the great serpent that "swallowed" nearly all the members of their tribe, and the Illini, while the rock which upheld the figures of the Piasa remained standing, insisted that the carving represented a monster which for a long time caught and devoured every Illini man, woman, or child unfortunate enough to fall into his clutches, and would have exterminated the tribe had he not been slain by a party of ambushed warriors, with poisoned arrows.

IT SEEMS probable that the Algonquins and Iroquoians themselves are some of the descendants of the earthwork-builders who worshipped the Great Snake or Water-Monster. As shown in the above stories, they recall it as a supernatural destructive power. Such a theme would inevitably dominate the tradition of a sacrificial creed once prevalent among themselves, had it grown to such race-suicidal proportions, like its later counterpart in Aztec Mexico, that they finally repudiated it with a horror which proved fatal to its ministers and champions. At any rate, a connection of some kind, not entirely broken at the time of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, is evident in the tribal histories of both Mexico and the Atlantic-Mississippi district. They are histories of one and the same religion. The form of serpent-worship expressed in the symbolism of the Ohio serpent-mounds, whatever people built them, is unquestionably that of the Nahua snake-cult of Mexico.

The basis of Mexican snake-theology is recognition of the male and female sides of nature as essential. The Nahua word *coatl* means "twin" as well as "snake." *Ciacoatl*, the Woman-Serpent or Earth-Mother, is represented as the twin sister and consort of the rain-and-water god, the Cloud-Serpent, *Mixcoatl*, also known under the name Tlaloc. Both principles are combined in another expression of the idea—Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, who is represented as both male and female. The simpler conception of two separate deities, a god and a goddess, is the one expressed in the two serpent-mounds of Ohio.

THE Brush Creek serpent has the essential symbolism of Ciacoatl, the Woman-Snake, or Earth-Mother. One of her Mexican names was "The Devourer," the name by which the Illini remembered the Piasa. One of her statues in Mexico was "adorned with skulls and cross-bones, with outstretched tongue, which signified that she always had great thirst for human blood, and never refused sacrifices offered to her." At festivals she was painted as a frog with a bloody mouth in every joint of her body, to signify that "the Earth, or Earth-Mother, devours everything." The great jaws of the Brush Creek serpent are distended out of all proportion to the body, in the representation of swallowing the oval-shaped figure inclosed in them, in the center of which is said to have been originally a stone altar. Another pair of jaws represent the bodiless head of another serpent, closing around the oval from the opposite quarter. The meaning of the double mouth, completely inclosing the oval, is unmistakable to any one familiar with North American "sign-talk." It is an "all-mouth," a symbol of the all-devouring Earth-Mother, as plainly as the symbols used on Mexican statues and paintings to signify her omnivorous appetite.

The convolutions of the Brush Creek serpent, too, are exactly like those of a snake twisting itself over the ground in pursuit of prey. (See drawing.)

NEXT, the body of the Little Miami serpent is as symbolic of Ciacoatl's male consort, the Cloud-Serpent, Mixcoatl, as the Brush Creek effigy is symbolic of herself. Instead of twisting back and forth like a snake running after prey, it copies the posture of a snake erecting itself to strike at a victim or an enemy. The lines of the body, reversing abruptly, correspond to the zig-zag figure employed in Mexican artistry to represent the lightning-flash, the most dreadful attribute of Mixcoatl when he is in the clouds. The storm-symbol added to the position of the effigy's head overlooking the river, com-

by courtesy of the Peabody Museum

pletes the symbolic expression of the idea that the male serpent is god of the water, from that element's origin in the sky to its resting-places and pathways on the earth.

A mica effigy found at the Turner village-site, a few miles farther down the Little Miami, is of exactly the same form as this mound-effigy, with two horns, such as were probably part of the earthen effigy-head that has been washed away. The horns in Mexican symbolism signify the male and female phases of nature united in one divinity, which would indicate Quetzalcoatl rather than Mixcoatl, were not the idea of a single sky-god or water-god the one emphasized in the mound-effigy itself.

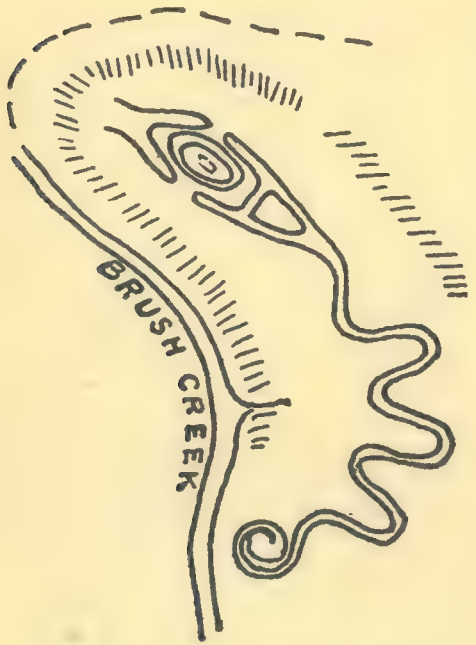
AMONG the Iroquoian tribal tales is the Tuscarora legend of "the great horned serpent" that once appeared south of Lake Ontario. His poisonous breath killed many of the Iroquoian villagers before he left the country in a *storm of thunderbolts*. Does the story allude to the worship of the great Storm-Serpent symbolized on the Little Miami? Is the Seneca tale of the monstrous serpent which swallowed all the Seneca tribe except two orphan children a recollection of the contemporary part played by the Miami serpent's feminine partner, the all-mouthed "Devourer" of Brush Creek?

There is another account of the snake-besieged Seneca fort, which represents that the besieging force consisted of, not one enormous serpent, but a pair of them, male and female. A young Seneca warrior saved his tribe by making love to the false Squaw-Snake, who urged him to dispose of her husband by a method which the patriotic Seneca utilized to kill both monsters together. In this myth possibly the functions of both Ohio serpent-mounds are commemorated.

In fact, the Iroquoian tribes seem to be the best northern representatives of the Mexican snake-cult. Its characteristic features seem to survive in the medicine-myths and some of the art-designs of the Cherokees. On some of the shell gorgets from North Carolina mounds the serpent-symbol is as prominent a figure as it is on the artifacts from the altar-mounds of the Little Miami or the Scioto. The Great Horned Serpent and his associate monster, the Ground-Snake, are still living super-animals in the imagination of the Cherokee medicine man.

THE Horned Serpent of Cherokee belief corresponds very closely to the Mexican idea of the chief serpent-deity. In some Mexican dramatic

representations the priest impersonating him "not only bears in his hand a star-image, but also exhibits a star-group *on his head-dress*, consisting of *a central star*, surrounded by a blue *ring*. Attached to



The Woman-Serpent, or Earth-Mother

"THE ALL-DEVOURER."

Note double mouth, symbol for "all-mouth," equivalent to "all-devourer."

this against a dark ground, six other stars are depicted, making *seven* in all."

The costume of that Mexican state-figure seems to reproduce the markings of a more primitive conception, a monster like that which the Cherokees say "has two horns on its head, and a bright *blazing crest like a diamond* upon its forehead, and scales glittering like sparks of fire. It has *rings* or spots of color along its whole length, and can not be wounded except by shooting in the *seventh* spot (ring) from the head, because under this spot are its heart and life."

The Cherokees equally fear the enormous Ground-Snake, the sight of which to a single person is death, and to several persons disaster for the whole tribe. This may be a lingering memory of the Earth-Serpent, or Earth-Mother, whose image twists along the rocky ridge over Brush Creek.

The evidence that these legends refer to Ohio is almost direct. The Cherokees claim that their tribe lived north of the Ohio River until about the thirteenth century; the Mohawks and Hurons have affirmed the claim, saying that they drove the Cherokees out of Ohio at the end of a war which had lasted a hundred years. The Lenape, anciently residents of Michigan with other Algonquins, also claim the honors of that contest. Their chronicle indicates that the Cherokees were expelled by an Algonquin-Iroquoian alliance.

BUT though so many Iroquoian and Algonquin tribes retain apparent recollections of snake-worship in the Ohio Valley, it can not be assumed that they are the sole living representatives of the Snake People, or earthwork-builders. The Aztec-Chichimec histories of a pre-Mexican period in some part of the continent north of Mexico are as applicable to the Ohio Valley as are the myths of the tribes who last lived among or near the Snake People's monuments.

The Aztec-Chichimecs originated from a Divine Mountain, as did the Senecas, Cherokees, Natchez, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks. The four last-named tribes, known as the Chata-Maskoki group, like the Aztec-Chichimecs, called their Mother-Hill "the bending hill," or "the crooked mountain." The Aztec account explains the name with the statement that the top of the mountain, hill, or mound, was curved or "bent over" toward the water in which it stood.

Analysis of the two words which form the name "Colhuacan," however, show that the Aztec-Maya compound is ambiguous. It may just as properly be interpreted "the twisting mound," or "the double serpent." The first phrase would apply to either the Brush Creek or the Little Miami serpent-effigy, and the second would be a suitable reference to the pair. The phrase "The Double Serpent" expresses the basic idea of the Mexican theology, the idea of a male and female unity, one conception of which is the dual character of Quetzalcoatl.

IN THE description of Aztlan it is more than probable that the features of several localities, and the events of more than one period, are assigned to one time and place. Unity of effect is the aim of even the most primitive art-designs. "Myths" are neither history nor baseless fabrications; they are historical fiction, the very oldest members of the fiction family. Accordingly, the following feature of the Aztlan-myth may be a general allusion to a common incident of several localities: It is related that the people of Aztlan crossed a river or channel every year to the Colhuacan to offer sacrifices. This may have occurred for a long time at both Brush Creek and the Little Miami. In the ritual of water-worship the crossing of a stream may have been an important symbolic part of the sacrificial ceremony.

The myth-feature would equally apply to the Turner village-site. There a circular earthwork on a gravel ridge was connected by a descending graded way with the large village on a lower level, which then adjoined the river. The old river-bed, because so far from the present one, has been overlooked. One arm of the former stream seems to have extended between the elevated fort and the lower village, and was *crossed* by the causeway. Beyond the causeway, in the village, and close to what was then the bank of the main river, were the seven mounds containing altars on which, perhaps all at one time, perhaps one year after another, the wealth of the tribe had been sacrificed by fire.

The proximity of these altar-mounds to the former stream, their varying sizes and positions, touching one another, so that the outline of the group would suggest the head, body, legs and tail of the water-monster whose stone image was found with the

mica figure of the Cloud-Serpent on one of the altars, all formed a silent record, perhaps, of one of those sacrifices which the people of Aztlan every year crossed a channel to offer to their deity.

THE seven altar-mounds grouped in the protecting shape of the water-monster's outline, suggest another identity with Aztec history. Seven tribes abandoned Aztlan, the Aztecs several centuries after the other six. The altar-mounds are strong evidence that seven clans composed the Turner tribe. The number of clans in any Iroquoian tribe formerly was seven, and one of those tribes, the Cherokee, retains that number to this day. Until a very recent date the Cherokees made a practise of erecting seven memorial mounds whenever the deaths among their chief men had reached that number.

To be sure, the Maya tribes south of Mexico had the same system of clan and tribal organization; so had the Pueblos of near-Mexico; so had peoples in other parts of the world in times long anterior to the beginnings of North American history. Alone, the institution is no proof of close relationship. The point simply is that the pre-Mexican history of the Aztec-Chichimecs fits the Ohio Valley as well as it fits Mexico or Central America, if not better. The culture-ideas of the northern Snake People, and of their Iroquoian representatives, are more like those expressed or implied in the history of Aztlan than like those which the Aztecs after leaving Aztlan found in Mexico, and not all of which they adopted. The ferocious extent to which they practised human sacrifice, an extent which made them a horror to other Mexican peoples, even the Chichimec tribes of their own blood, had never been reached in the older forms of Mexican snake-worship. The Aztecs brought the exaggerated ceremony with them into the Valley of Mexico from whatever part of North America had been their home, and the only part of North America which retains distinct tribal memories of a snake-god appetite equally insatiable is the great valley marked by the effigy of the all-devouring Woman-Serpent at one end and by the carved likeness of a kindred monster at the other.

Mexican mythology seems to be expressed also in the domestic architecture of the Ohio Snake People. The mode of constructing their dwellings typifies their supposed Mother-Hill or earth-origin, as well as the legend that in Aztlan the seven tribes lived in seven caves.

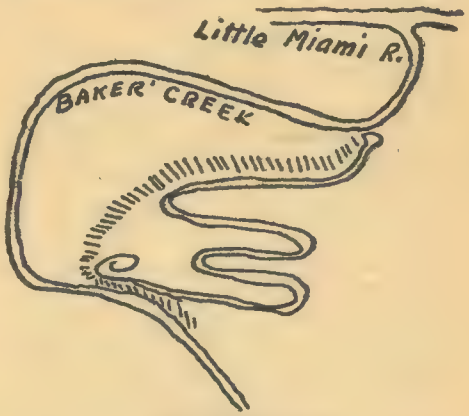
All peoples try to live the ideas of their religion in symbols of the mystic life made with their own hands. All idols and images, of every faith, are the result of that attempt. The enduring serpent-mounds are such; the crossing of a river to offer a sacrifice to the god of sky and water is but a realistic mode of living a sacred tradition.

Likewise, the unquestioning belief that we are born children or after-children of the Earth-Mother, that our first parents came out of one of her hills, will subconsciously direct us to live up to our pedigree by creating with our grateful hands a dwelling designed in imitation of the reputed Hill in which we are told the Mother brought to life and housed our first ancestors.

AS IN any other kind of fiction-making, incidents are shaped to fit one another, so a number of separate myths are shaped to form a single consistent myth. The myth of seven tribes or families once established in an actual social system, the seven flesh-and-blood tribes must fit their domestic life to the hand-made earth-house which illustrates the imaginary original Mother-Hill. The seven clans or tribes must live their actual lives in seven actual earth-houses.

That is, since the seven altar-mounds of the Turner village-site grouped in the water-monster's symbolic shape to form a totem of the tribal name, indicate the mythic clan-number, the same mythology would direct that the seven clans live in seven communal earth-houses—useful, locally adapted, man-made symbols of the ancestral Seven Caves. One thing or the other is evident: either the North American "earth-house" originated from the myth of the Mother-Hill, or that myth originated from long tribal use of the earth-house.

The earth-house was common to the Mansans, the Minntaree, and other tribes that lived west of the Mississippi within the past century. "Hut-rings" in more than one Ohio village-site indicate the same kind of dwelling. Post-molds in the earthen banks that inclose the Turner village-area lead the Peabody Museum to suggest that long clan-houses of timber-frames covered with earth stood on the embankments, the gaps between them obstructed with palisades, so that these living-quarters at the same time would form something of a barrier to the entrance of an enemy. The Mexican account of Aztlan is perhaps not merely a symbol of the issue



The Cloud Serpent

of the whole human race from the Mother-Hill, but also a little recollection of the manner in which their tribal ancestors lived that conception in the Ohio Valley.

The Nahua population of Mexico at the time of the Conquest had three distinct histories of three immigrations into Mexico from some more northern part of the continent. One immigration took place about the beginning of the Christian era, one about five centuries afterward, and the last in the eleventh or twelfth century.

The monuments, and the general culture-ideas attributed to the first two bodies of immigrants—respectively, the Olmecs and the Toltecs—after they reached Mexico, certainly are not contradictory of their own statement that they came from the Lower Mississippi and Gulf region, where the platform-mound village-site, or pyramid-group, is the

distinctive type of earthwork. All that Mexican history tells of the last body of immigrants, the Aztec-Chichimecs, as inhabitants of another section of a great northern Nahua-land, and of their subsequent character, finds its nearest corroboration in the archeology of the Ohio Valley, where the Twin Serpents are the most striking earthwork constructions, and the combined square-and-circle fortifications are further symbols of a double-natured deity.

The circle is the symbol of the sky, or heaven, and the square the symbol of the earth. Their lines drawn around the earth-houses of the villagers invoked the protection of the sky-god and the earth-goddess as directly as did the sacrifices offered to Mixcoatl and Ciacoatl at the Little Miami and Brush Creek.

In the face of such facts, linguists may not be able forever to deny the assertion of the Mexicans of the period following the Conquest: "The tribes north of the Gulf of Mexico are Nahuas, and speak the Nahua language."—JOHN BROWN JEWETT.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Jack Rendel rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. No one can accuse him of talking too long but, after all, he tells us quite a bit about himself.

Native Son of California, born in Oakland—more years ago than I care to admit—say, about twenty-seven.

Many of those years were spent in seeing the world—under severe financial difficulties—clear round from India *via* Africa to Chile. The war put a crimp in me and since then I have been running "Community Theaters" in remote places, sometimes writing the plays—to save paying royalties to bigger and better authors.—J. L. RENDEL.

LOST mines again—the Breyfogle and the Blue Bucket. First a letter of inquiry, second a letter offering what may perhaps be new information. Every time a lost mine comes up at Camp-Fire I leap to my feet to cry out in a loud voice that *Adventure* and its editors publish anything concerning lost mines entirely at the other fellow's peril. The subject is an interesting one for talk around our Camp-Fire, but if any one sets out to find one of these lost mines neither Camp-Fire nor its magazine is to be held responsible if he doesn't find it or have as pleasant a time as he'd like.

Santa Barbara, California.

CAMP-FIRE:—I don't horn in on things much as a rule but I sure would like to know if any comrade could give me some dope on the lost Breyfogle Mine. As I get the story, briefly, Breyfogle was going from Virginia City to Phoenix, and passing through Death Valley he stumbled on this mine accidental-like. Well, some Indians attacked him that night and when he got hit on the head with a tomahawk his sense of direction got sort of muddled and he never could find the mine again. I'm mighty interested in the mine and would appreciate if some comrade could wise me up a bit.—RUSSELL D. WILLIAMS.

Please send replies to Mr. Williams direct. Now for the Blue Bucket:

Goldendale, Washington.

I know that any mention of the famous lost "Blue Bucket Mine" is like shaking a red rag before a bull, but I dug up a little information concerning it, *accidently*, that puts a new face on the whole matter and might help possibly to locate the region where discovery was made.

Mrs. Emma J. Brownlee, R.D.3, Goldendale, Wash., is an old pioneer lady of the West. Formerly she lived at Canyon City, Oregon. She has heard many first-hand stories of the lost mine, or placer deposit, but the one she says seemed to her the plausible story was told her by a Mr. Wooley, one of the immigrants who was with Stephen Meek's train when he guided it toward Heppner. She says she does not know whether the party telling her was H. Wooley, or his brother, but it was one of the two brothers, both members of the party.

AT THE time Mr. Wooley was a lad of 19. The occasion of the discovery was at a time when the supplies of the immigrants, in shape of food, were very low. They had taken a wrong course and were practically lost as far as their bearings were concerned, and the train had split up into two divisions. The one Wooley was with was in the vicinity of Malheur River, not far from Wagontire Mountain. The discovery of the metal was made the morning before the wagon-train hit the desert in that region and entered it, hoping to find easier going north. One of the drivers found a small creek, and stooped down to quench his thirst. While drinking he noticed some peculiar chunks of dull colored metal in the sand in the bed of the stream. He picked up three of the pieces and took them back to the wagon-train. Later in examining them he found they were of soft metal and could be easily beaten into various shapes with a small blacksmith's hammer. Each piece was large enough to hold in his fingers while he hammered the end of the oblong piece. The hammering process and the peculiarity of the metal caused the members of the train to decide it was gold, although none of them knew it in its native state.

THE location where the metal was found was quite a distance back and, as their supplies were very low, their first thought was to reach their destination, with the idea of later returning and relocating the spot where found.

Mr. Wooley, years later, came back with this purpose in view, but was not able to locate the spot, although he knew it was not far from Wagontire Mountain and along the trail they had followed, as best he could remember after years of absence. He never found the spot. But he said that the place of discovery was not on the Malheur River, or on any creek tributary of any noticeable size, but the pieces of gold were found in a very small rivulet in a cove

or pocket, somewhat off the wagon-trail, through which the small rivulet ran, possibly from a nearby spring as its source of water supply.

This story may interest some of the old-timers who have hunted for the lost placer. Personally I know nothing of the facts in the story and am simply giving you this version as I heard it repeated lately by a lady who personally met and heard the story from one of the original immigrants with the wagon-train.—W. S. CHARLES.

SOMETHING from Harold Lamb in connection with his novelette in this issue. In view of our Camp-Fire argument concerning Julius Cæsar, I wonder whether that gentleman too read Sun Tsu.

The wings used by the rider of the white horse were often met with on the borderland in those "times of the troubles." A generation later the armored hussars of Poland wore them, and they there became as famous as the bearskin shakos of Napoleon's guard in another century.

Sun Tsu, quoted in the chapter headings, wrote what is believed to be the first treatise on the art of war, 500 B.C. It's mighty good reading. Translated and studied by Frederick the Great, Napoleon and the German high commanders who fought in the last war. Sun Tsu got precious little credit.

The map, by the way, is a copy from one old Russia Company "presented to the House of Lords." But I had to modernize the geography a little and change the old spelling.—HAROLD LAMB.

IT LOOKS as if "A Recruit with Walker," the autobiographical recollections of Alfred P. DeShields as set down for us in our August 30th issue by J. D. Sweeney, superintendent of schools at Red Bluff, California, are to be accepted as an authentic document of decided historic value. Which is cause not only for our additional thanks to Mr. Sweeney and to Robert Welles Ritchie, through whose friendly offices the manuscript came to us, but also for Camp-Fire to view itself with some pardonable pride.

Here are the letters so far received since we published the article. There seems no ground for reasonable doubt that DeShields was actually with Walker and that his memory of events, even to details, was remarkably accurate. Trust Camp-Fire to run down the facts!

At the time the article was published the only point—from the rather meager external and direct evidence at hand—that cast any doubt on the authenticity of the DeShields manuscript was raised by Arthur D. Howden Smith of our writers' brigade who pointed out that the name of DeShields did not, from a cursory examination, appear in a New York *Herald* report of the return on the *Roanoke* of part of part Walker's command to the United States. As will be seen from the following letters that point is no longer cause for doubt.

Washington, D. C.

After reading Eugene Cunningham's statement that there were four of Minister Wheeler's scrapbooks bearing on the subject now in the Library of Congress I went over and consulted them and I found a clipping from the New Orleans *Delta* of July 1, 1857. This clipping was a letter from their correspondent at Aspinwall, bearing the date of June 19th and announcing among other things the arrival of the surrendered members of Walker's army part of whom had arrived that very day by the schooner *J. R. Mora*. Among about a hundred names appear those of A. P. DeShields and L. DeShields. The correspondent also stated that the *U. S. S. Roanoke* had arrived the previous day, thus confirming the De Shields article in its details.

I may add that almost all the incidents and people mentioned in the article appear in one or more of the clippings, for example, the duel about the cat, the desertion of Maj. Bell, the killing of Captain Mann, etc. though some of the names are spelled differently, as Sevier instead of Severe.

The only important difference is apparently the error of Mr. DeShields in writing "McGonigle" for McCollum.

One curious discrepancy is DeShields' statement that his cousin Thomas Basie was dead when DeShields arrived. Now the A Company of the Second Rifles was formed after DeShields' arrival and it was in the fight at Granada on October 12, yet on October 19 an affidavit was sworn to concerning the murder of certain civilians by the Costa Riqueños and this is verified by "Thomas Basye, Judge of the First Instance, O. D., Granada." The name does not appear again. DeShields' memory seems to have been remarkably accurate and I believe his account is substantially correct in all details.

One of the interesting things in the clippings is the constant presence of the names of Vanderbilt and Morgan and references to English business firms. Apparently big business was in politics then as now.—ALFRED BUEHL.

Visalia, California.

Your issue for August 30th with the "Recruit with Walker" article caused me to interview a son of Alfred P. DeShields.

Our Mr. DeShields, now about 50 or 55 years of age, has promised to give me all he can remember of his father—who was not a blacksmith as Mr. Ritchie "remembers" but was an amalgamater and later a superintendent in one of the large Nevada mines, still later an accountant until his death in 1913. Our DeShields' uncle, brother of A. P., was for many years a deputy in the county offices of Telama Co., being appointed regardless of the politics of the incoming officers.

Mr. DeShields seems to have an endless supply of tales of incidents regarding Walker and promises

to give me an opportunity to set them down. Also promises to visit his sister next month and to secure a number of documents and clippings that she has preserved. He speaks of more than one uncle—brothers of his father—and mentioned the elder's cousin, Tom Basie.

DeShields also gave me the names of two other Walker men friends of A. P., and as one of the families resides about a hundred or so miles from here—in Modesto—I shall try to interview any of the survivors.

"Happy," as we call our DeShields, today related much that was in the article and without prompting or seeing the magazine. It looks like a good lead for something of interest.—MME. L. WEAVER.

St. Louis, Missouri.

The article brought to mind "With Walker in Nicaragua" by the late Gen. James Carson Jamison, who died several years ago at Guthrie, Okla. Jamison was captain of Co. D, 1st Light Inf., Army of the Republic of Nicaragua. The MS. of his book was prepared by the late Fred S. Barde of Guthrie, who for a long time was the Oklahoma correspondent of the *Kansas City Star*. The book was published in 1909, printed by the E. W. Stephens Publishing Co., Columbia, Mo., copyrighted by the author. Jamison was adjutant-general of the Missouri National Guard and later held the same position in the National Guard of Oklahoma Territory. He used to come in and visit around the Guthrie *Leader* when I was a reporter on that paper. A man of high standing in both Missouri and Oklahoma, there is every reason to believe his story is accurate, and it certainly has a convincing ring.

After looking this book over again and comparing some of it with the DeShields narrative, I feel that DeShields was undoubtedly with Walker. Both he and Jamison mention several of the same officers by name, and both agree in a good many particulars, although Jamison gives dates by day, month and year, while DeShields does not. But the thing that convinces me DeShields was there is the incident of the killing of Capt. Mills by Lieut. Payne over the cat which was to be eaten. Both writers mention this, though with slight variation as to detail. It seems to me that the recalling of such an incident after all the years is far more convincing than citations of dates, names of officers and other matters which might easily have been "faked" from old records.

While copies of Jamison's book are still to be had in Guthrie, I am sure it soon will become rare, as the edition could not have been large.

Jamison got home from Nicaragua just about in time to enter the Confederate Army, according to my recollection. He has a number of relations over in Pike County. Mo.

I'm just passing this along for the benefit of any "Camp-Fire" readers who may be interested, since I am sure Gen. Jamison's book is little known except among students of such matters.—IRA D. MULLINAX.

Berkeley, California.

You will be interested in a little light I have found in searching somewhat rapidly the meager Walker books here in the Bancroft Library, U. C., where I am taking summer work.

I found a story published by Henry Shipley and Company, Sacramento, Cal., 1857, entitled "Last of the Filibusters" (note 11) written by William Frank Stewart, a member of the Walker party.

On page 74, (Appendix E, taken from New York *Herald*, August 5, 1857), he gives a list of those who were returned to the United States on the Frigate *Roanoke*, Captain J. B. Montgomery. In that list, second column, fifth from the bottom is the name of A. P. Deshield (note this spelling, due either to printer or writer no doubt) and just below the name Lewis Deshield.

On page 111, my story, he mentions meeting a brother, who was evidently this Lewis, but of whom I had not heard, and whom his daughter, Mrs. Zaniboni, did not mention when I asked her to O. K. my sketch (p. 182). But evidently Lewis is a family name as one son of A. P. bore that name. So the guess of Mr. Smith is no doubt incorrect as the list referred to in the booklet has only the two "Deshields" named.

Otherwise, as yet, I have no clue to Walker's complete roster, the one mentioned being the only one I have found.—J. D. SWEENEY.

COMRADE JAMES A. ADAMS of Seattle was good enough to send us an old freighting bill dated back to 1865 in Idaho. Unfortunately neither shipping point nor destination was mentioned, but it is interesting as it stands:

Idaho, April 26, 1865.

Rec'd from Messrs Dorce and Bros. the undermentioned goods and parties charged to be collected as extended—

S. S. Moore			
1 Trunk	70 lbs.	28.00	
I. McNeil			
1 Trunk	113 @ 40	45.20	
P. Grace			
1 Trunk	90 lbs.	36.00	
Michal Corrigan			
1 Trunk	95 @ .40	38.00	
I. Thomson			
2 Trunks		96.00	
Mrs. Hamphan .			
1 big Trunk and 2 bundles freight		80.00	As contracted
1 feather bed	37 lbs. @ .50	18.75	
Mrs. Mahoney			
1 bundle clothing	67 @	26.80	
M. Murphy			
1 Valese and 1 wool blanket		14.00	
A. Heed			
1 box Mcdise	67 @ 30	20.10	
J. P. Hopkins			
10 Drs.	500 lbs.	150.00	
		$552.85	

(Signed) Powell & Co.

THANKS to one of our comrades in South America we have interesting confirmation of an Englishman's appearing in a Spanish bull-fight, without any preliminary training to speak of, and successfully killing bulls in approved fashion. As you will remember, such an incident figured in one of our stories by Percy Charles Chandler and is the kind of thing the ultra sophisticated are inclined to scoff at as having no foundation in real life.

Havana, Cuba.

It is with lively pleasure that I forward you the enclosed cutting and explanatory letter, very kindly sent me by Mr. C. N. Pridham of the Western Telegraph Company, Ltd., Buenos Ayres. Mr. Pridham read my yarn, "The Bullfight," also my statement in "Camp-Fire" of the same issue to the effect that the yarn was founded on fact, but with the admission that I disremembered the details.

SO I am, naturally, delighted to find such positive confirmation of "The Bullfight" as is contained in this cutting from the London *Daily Mail* of four years ago, sent me all the way from Buenos Ayres. Evidently *Adventure* goes far south, as well as north, east, and west. Decidedly the cause of Mr. Trimby's appearance in the bullring—a boast by some Spaniards that no Briton could possibly equal the skill and courage of the Spanish bullfighter—was a better reason than the one attributed to *Wilberforce Teague* in the story. Whatever the cause, I imagine that it will be as gratifying to Americans as to Britons to feel that there was found, on that forgotten occasion, one of their race inspired enough to take up the boastful Spanish challenge, cool and courageous enough to follow it through to a point where

"Even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer."

I should say "chair," for the audience carried Trimby in triumph from the ring. My thanks, and, I feel sure, *Adventure's* for this courteous letter and interesting enclosure. Although I have not the pleasure of Mr. Pridham's acquaintance I assure him that "Oceanus non dissociat"—the motto of the Eastern and Associated Telegraph Companies—and I'll meet him and thank him appropriately one of these days in the Strand, if not on Broadway or the Malecon—or the Avenida de Mayo.

Those who have seen the Andalusian bull in action, with his lashing tail, murderous horns and incredibly active maneuvering, will be able thoroughly to appreciate the nerve of this young Irishman.—P. C. CHANDLER.

The clipping from the London *Daily Mail* follows:

Great interest and enthusiasm was evinced at a bullfight at the Spanish town of La Linea, when a well-known Britisher at Gibraltar, Mr. Leonard Trimby, of the Eastern Telegraph Service, under the nom-de-guerre of Don Carlos el Irelande (the Irishman) killed two bulls in fine style.

The cause of his appearance in the ring was a boast by Spaniards that no Briton could possibly equal the skill and courage of the Spanish bullfighter. His reply was given when for the first time he faced two bulls in the Linea bullring and killed both of them with a thrust of the matador's sword, after playing them so skillfully with his red cape that the excited crowd carried him in triumph from the ring. This young Irish amateur toreador is the second known British bullfighter, the other being an officer of the Cameron Highlanders named O'Hara, who appeared in the ring early last century.

TRIMBY'S fair hair, blue eyes, and quiet, unassuming manner go with square shoulders, a medium-sized, alert frame, and firm-set jaw.

He was born at Cawnpore, where his father commanded the Royal Munster Fusiliers. He has been at several stations and was once before at Gibraltar for three years, when bullfighting began to interest him. He returned to Gibraltar 18 months ago and got an old bullfighter to show him how to use the red cape with which the bull's charge is diverted from the matador's body. He had only one lesson, and that with a cow, before making his appearance in the full toreador's costume in the Linea bullring on condition that his share of the fees should be given to charity.

IT WAS a stirring experience," he said, "and from the matador's point of view I can't help saying it is exciting sport. Directly the bulls are released into the enclosure you have to make up your mind instantly on several points. The first is whether the bull is what they call a 'bravo' or not. If he is, he will charge for the red cloth. If not, he will go for the body. Both mine charged for the body, and the horns miss you by inches only. Then you need to estimate weight and speed.

"After tiring the bull with making him charge your cape, you kill him by thrusting a sword between the shoulder blades, I had been to a Gibraltar slaughterhouse to learn the exact point to aim for, and I killed the first bull with one thrust, while the other fell dead at the second."

IT MAY be cold weather when you read this but it's hot when I write it and I'm tired and my morals are at a low ebb and I'm going to violate our general rule against letters of praise for our magazine at Camp-Fire. Anyhow, as this comrade says, you like the magazine or you wouldn't be reading it, and, liking it, you won't mind once in a while hearing some other fellow endorse your liking. (And I'm cutting out a little of the praise at that.) The letter was addressed to me, not Camp-Fire, but Mr. Miller was willing that I should pass it on to you instead of talking myself.

River Edge, New Jersey.

A couple of years ago I wrote to ask you why no war stories were being printed and you gave me the reasons upon which your editorial policy was based.

Very soon afterward you printed Leonard Nason's first yarn and I like to think that my protest may have helped in bringing about its publication.

Now everybody's doing it and mostly abominably. Nason shines out like a diamond and once more *Adventure* has been first and best in the field, blazing the way in literary styles.

That makes three fields in which you have counted coup, to wit:

Historical novels, particularly as covering early American history.

"Westerns," usually partaking somewhat of the nature of the foregoing.

World war stories, debunked.

Only Emerson Hough's two stories have surpassed your offerings in the first field; in the second and third you stand alone. Leaving out all slop, I really believe that you are blazing the trail. Why not remind the brethren? It would increase their enjoyment and stimulate comparison with other publications.

You also bid fair to outrun the —— as an incubator for young writers. I think your stable averages as well as theirs, right now, with more promise. Except Thomas McMorrow, I am somewhat sceptical of the further development of their young string. Nason will whip the tar out of the whole lot.

I was in France and I have never found a false note in his writing. He has made those times live again, for me. I wish you could reprint all of his stories together; they grade rather unevenly but I'd sure admire to have every word he has written.

If ever you get contact with a gentleman named Harris who wrote "Pirate Tales from the Law," please tell him one admirer still preserves "Captain Kidd" and hopes fervently for more.

Don't bother with an acknowledgment, if you are busy—and of course you are. I just have to bust out every couple of years.

But tell the world that you're setting the literary pace and putting the "pulps" up ahead of the book-paper imitators.—ALFRED W. MILLER.

A magazine with a name that connotes the melodramatic. Stories of action. Cheap paper. Authors many of whose names are not—or not yet—authoritatively branded by some one else as the fiction writers who are all the rage. Pages kept clean of sex. Our magazine has had to fight its way against a heavy handicap.

Even heavier than it may seem. Those who read merely for excitement and make no demands as to quality find our stories not sufficiently blood-curdling and will not read the magazine. Those who want the kind of fiction we print do not expect to find it in an "all-fiction," or under such a name as ours, and too often will not even pick it up to give it even a hasty trial. Most of all, they do not expect to find it on cheap paper.

The psychology stirred up by cheap paper is amazing—and rather pathetic. I venture that if it were possible to hand to a thousand people a story printed on cheap paper, then have them forget ever having seen it and then hand them exactly the same story printed on highly calendered paper, there wouldn't be ten per cent of them who would consider it as good the first time as they would the second.

Nor ten per cent who, if they read a story in an all-fiction, would consider it so good as if they read it in some magazine they were accustomed to look to for best fiction.

THERE is also a curious pyschology developing in this country over the "melodramatic," which is purely a relative term. A curious and ever-growing tendency to consider any physical action melodramatic and crude and very low from a literary point of view. That position is of course untenable in the face of any serious consideration of the real nature of art, and has been attained illogically though quite naturally. People observed, rather hastily, that all "melodramatic" stories were, roughly speaking, action stories. Following the usual custom of the human mind, with its usual disregard of logic and its rock-like syllogisms, they deduced the theory that all action stories were therefore "melodramatic."

Most writers fall before the same fallacy. As they gain more technique and sophistication, aspire to a more perfect literary attainment, they abandon action for—less "melodramatic" material. Such as Homer, Shakespeare and others to the contrary notwithstanding. Or else deliberately cater to the general point of view.

Professional critics—but that's a long story. I have a theory that a professional critic is, after serving five years as such, no longer competent in more than one case out of a hundred. He becomes jaded, dulled to the elemental and everlasting values and stirred to interest by only the comparatively unusual or even only by the bizarre or decadent. Also in most cases his publication compels him to cover more ground than he can possibly cover thoroughly or with careful judgment or with any freshness of mind. If the public realized the extent to which books are "reviewed but not read," or are given only cursory examination—

The really ugly part of it all is that this same growing scorn of action stories is too often a growing scorn of physical action

itself (other than golf and other highly decorous and often extremely mild activities). And the next step, a natural one already taken by a large part of our population, is a step into decadence in both literature and life. There are gaps in my argument—it can not in brief space be more than a sketchy suggestion, but most of you will need no help from me in analyzing out the connection between scorn of the action story and the increase of mental and moral decadence in both fiction and life.

I am talking too much, but our magazine has had to fight against these attitudes and tendencies for fifteen years and it's only natural to explode a little once in a while.

The cheerful thing about it all is that, despite all these things, our magazine has been slowly but surely gathering to itself the kind of people who are its rightful audience. Looking at the situation not just as readers of *Adventure* but as Americans, there is decided comfort in the fact that during these very years since the war when the decadent tendency has become so pronounced, particularly in the last three or four years, there has been a very pronounced turning to our magazine because it tries hard to keep clean from sex, loose ethics generally, effeminacy and decadence. These reasons for the turning are no mere inference of the editor but have been flatly and specifically stated by so many of you that there is no room for doubt. All of which, being interpreted into larger terms, means that in America there is, along with decadence, a strong and growing reaction against it. For which let us thank God. May the minority's reaction gain strength enough to turn the current.

Getting back to our own particular case, are our stories, after all, so "melodramatic" even under a fairly harsh interpretation of that wholly relative term? In how many of them are convincingness and characterization sacrificed to action? In how many of them are the amount and intensity of action out of proportion to time and place in real life? How many of them, in a magazine of highly calendered paper, would still seem melodramatic to those thousand test readers? And how many stories in that highly calendered magazine would become melodramatic if printed on cheap paper?

Give our magazine better paper? Personally, I think I'd rather not have it. Rather lick the handicaps than throw them off. And the going's getting decidedly better after fifteen years of fighting.

Also that cheap paper performs a large and valuable service for us of Camp-Fire—automatically it admits to our blaze only those who form their own judgments and form them from facts, not opinions or theories.

Referring again to Mr. Miller's letter, a good many of you will remember that Thomas McMorrow has had stories in our magazine off and on for quite a few years back into the past.

WE'RE sorry but there isn't any use asking us for back numbers more than a year old. We would be only too glad to oblige if we had them; but we haven't. Our Page of Various Practical Services Free To Any Reader appearing in the issue for the 30th of each month, prints notices of back issues—for sale and to buy—without cost. For issues more than a year old this is the best we can do.

PENNANTS bearing the Camp-Fire symbol are on hand and can be obtained by any one who will send twenty-five cents plus the necessary postage.

The cost is about five cents for postage to anywhere in the United States, and ten cents elsewhere.

Address "Camp-Fire Stations," care of *Adventure*.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
14—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—35. Europe. In Seven Parts
36—38. South America. In Three Parts
39. Central America
40—42. Mexico. In Three Parts
43—51. Canada. In Nine Parts
52. Alaska
53. Baffinland and Greenland
54—59. Western U. S. In Six Parts
60—64. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
65—74. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O. P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

Mucklucks

WHERE to buy them—red soft or gray black.

Request:—"I would very much like to know if you could inform me as to where I might be able to buy sealskin mucklucks or moccasins, the ones in question are one piece, unlined, have about a 12 or 14 inch top, and from what I can learn are worn extensively by the coast people of Labrador and Newfoundland."—H. A. COCKBURN, Shillington, Ontario.

Reply, by Mr. James:—I would suggest that you might purchase these from any store of The Hudson's Bay Company doing business in your Province, or failing that they stock them, a letter addressed to Messrs. Farquhar & Co. Ltd., Halifax, Nova Scotia, should bring the results required, as this firm has a line of steamers running along the Northern Coast of Newfoundland, and these are some of the products in which they trade.

You can buy these moccasins either in red soft or gray black. The former, I believe, are mostly favored by the Newfoundland wearers, the latter by the Esquimaux and dwellers on Labrador.

Should the Halifax firm not have them, an order to Messrs. Ayre & Sons, Ltd., Water Street, St. John's, would procure you this class of footwear.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do* NOT *write to the magazine itself.

Butterfly Collecting in General

AN INEXPENSIVE outfit for a very difficult business.

Request:—"I am interested in entomology especially in the collecting of butterflies and hope you will answer a number of questions concerning it.

(1) Is there any likelihood of a person making a business of collecting butterflies and other insects?

(2) Where to go to get some of the better specimens.

(3) About how much a small outfit costs.

(4) Is there any chance of getting in touch with person or persons who send collectors out?"—ALEX. BOSNAK, Detroit, Mich.

Reply, by Dr. Lutz:—I regret that my absence on summer field work has delayed my reply to your letter, also that my reply may dampen your hopes.

(1) People have made a business of collecting butterflies and other insects but it is hard work and there are small returns if money is the chief thing that is wanted. In fact, it may be safely said that the chances of making even bare expenses are very slight unless the person has a good knowledge of insects to start with. In fact, a knowledge of insects is necessary before anything worth while can be done in this work as a mere side-line.

(2) "Good" specimens of insects, meaning specimens of rare species, may be found anywhere. We are still finding within a few miles of New York species that are new to science. "Good" specimens, meaning showy affairs, are to be found only in the tropics; probably the East Indian region is the best from this standpoint.

(3) Five Dollars would buy all the collecting outfit that is strictly necessary. Of course if you want cabinets, in which to put your catch all nicely pinned out you will have to spend much more. I suggest that you write to Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, N. Y., and Kny-Scheerer Co., 119-7th Ave., New York City, for their catalogs.

(4) There is no chance of being sent out to collect insects until you have gained experience and shown your ability. Even then, the chances are small. Scientific institutions send out specialists, usually only those who are on their regular resident staff. Dealers buy from people already living in foreign countries or from people who travel largely for some other purpose.

Insect collecting is a mighty fine hobby but it yields big financial returns only in fiction. A successful professional entomologist must have a long training like any other professional man and collecting is the smallest part of his work.

Butterfly Collecting in Particular

LEARNING about the locale of the elusive lepidoptera.

Request:—"Will you please give me some information regarding both Panama Canal Zone and the West Indies; either or both of which districts I wish to visit for a week or two, and to collect "tourist samples" of insects (lepidoptera).

(1) At what season are butterflies most common? (Presumably shortly after the rainy season).

(2) When is the rainy season? Would January or February provide good weather?

(3) Could one 'sleep out' (as I often do at midsummer here) with a ground sheet, rug or net?

(4) Approx. cost of trip from Frisco, and name of line of boats. (I do not travel '*de luxe*')

(5) Is passport, or vaccination, necessary?"
——, Trail, B. C.

Reply, by Mr. Emerson:—The summer or dry season extends from January to April, the winter or rainy season during the greater part of the year. Heaviest rains are in October and November.

You do not need a passport for the Canal Zone, but you do for other of the places mentioned, as they will not sell you a ticket at the steamer offices if you can not exhibit such document. Passports may be obtained by United States citizens upon application to the Dep't of State, Washington, D. C. You would get yours of your local consul, and you would find it very handy as an identification paper, if you should get over the line and out of the Canal Zone. You could get a passport at San Francisco, Calif., but it might delay you somewhat, as it generally takes about six weeks after the application, before it is delivered into your hands.

As "to sleeping out," it is safer to swing your hammock under some roof as in most parts there are many "night prowlers" to bother you, and some of them are too dangerous to take any risk with.

Fares via. Pacific Mail Steamship Line, San Francisco, Calif. to Mazatlan, $87.; San Blas, $101.50; Manzanillo, $110.50; Acapulco, $117.; Salina Cruz, $117.; Ocos, $148.50; Champerico, $157.;

San José, $157.; Acajutla, $157.; La Libertad, $160.50; La Union, $65.; Amapala, $165.; Corinto, $173.; San Juan del Sur, $173.; Puntarenas, $188.; Balboa, $188.; Cristobal, $194.

Get a Rand, McNally's Pocket Map of Central America, and you can then spot these places quickly. The map is for sale for 35 cents at most newsdealers.

If you saw fit to take 2nd class, the fares are somewhat lower, but it takes from 16 to 20 days to make the trip, and it gets very monotonous.

The subject of vaccination might come up provided there happened to be a 'scare' started, but usually nothing is said about it.

On the trips into the high-lands I use an 'A' tent, with a man outside each taking a 4-hour watch, as you never can tell what the next thing may be that comes at you or is glad to get away from you, in tropical countries as I have found out during 20 years of it.

If there is anything further that I can answer, just send in the questions, as we wish to help our *Adventure* readers in all practical ways.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Portuguese East Africa

TRADING chances complicated by the clever banyan, who, incidentally, you will see mentioned in a poem in another part of this issue of the magazine.

Request:—"Having noticed your name in *Adventure* as an authority on Portuguese East Africa I would like a little advice from you as to conditions there.

Is the climate such that a white man can live comfortably there? Would two thousand dollars be enough to set a man up as a trader. If this is not practicable what would you advise as a means of livelihood in that country?"—EDWARD A. WEIGEL, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. Waring:—The answers to your first question, you will find in the enclosed printed leaflets.

As to trading. Along the whole of the East Coast the British Indian, or banyan as he is called, have a monopoly. They are very astute and experts at the game and a white man is not in it with them. I have seen it tried time and again, and in nearly every case the white man was the loser.

The banyan readily gains the confidence of the native and easily acquires their language as also their methods in barter and exchange. Having tried it out myself, I cannot advise you to enter the game.

Far in the interior, conditions might be different, but your capital would need to be larger and you would want a knowledge of the Portuguese language, as well as that of the native, unless you took along an interpreter. This would increase your expense.

Your last question I am unable to answer, for you have not given me any information about yourself, your age or occupation and qualifications.

Lumbering in Ottawa

MILLS that hire men.

Request—"I will be very much obliged, Sir. if you could furnish me with some information on lumbering in your section of Canada. Will you please kindly let me know if there is any lumbering company there and if so, will you please furnish me the addresses of some. I'm planning to go to Canada and settle there; but first I must see to it, that there's a place where I can work, and a lumber mill that will suit me. Also please send me some information regarding the climate of that region, especially if the winters are too crude.

I hope you will help me get the information I am looking for."—R. A. HERNANDEZ, San Juan, Porto Rico.

Reply, by Mr. Moore:—No lumber company here any more but there are lots of them in the Ottawa Valley. Here are a few:

McLachlan Bros., Arnprior, Ont.
Gillies Bros., Braeside, Ont.
Dennis-Canadian Co., Whitney, Ont.
E. B. Eddy Co., Hull, Que.
Hawkesbury Lumber Co., Hawkesbury, Que.
J. B. Booth, Ottawa, Ont.
Pembroke Lumber Co., Pembroke, Ont.

Climate is cold in winter over here, but it is healthy and produces a hardy race of men. As you did not specify any particular branch of the lumbering industry you wish to know something about, I will merely tell you that it is the thing for people who like the out-of-doors as workers in one of the best industries in the land.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Lumbering in Mexico

MILLS for manufacturing veneers.

Request:—"I was very much interested in your reply to T. P. C. McCloud, Cal., regarding lumbering conditions in Southeastern Mexico. I would like to ask whether or not there are many mills operating in that section, especially mills engaged in manufacturing veneers. I was under the impression that most of the finer woods were exported in the logs, is this true? What chance for success do you think a veneer mill would have in that territory. I enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope for reply."—J. W. CAVANAUGH, Madison, Wis.

Reply, by Mr. Sheets:—There is an unlimited opportunity for a mill engaged in manufacturing veneers in Southeastern Mexico for hundreds of reasons—the first of which is the fact that there is no lumber mill of any sort in all that vast, unexploited timber region.

Many inquiries have come in since my letter to T. P. C. of McCloud, Calif., was published. I wish I could write some answers that would start some development of the many opportunities that are awaiting development in lumber in Southeastern Mexico.

Let me quote in part from several answers I have just recently mailed on this subject:—"The Tropical

Fruits Products Co., No. 547 Drexel Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.—they have machinery there for a mill and furniture factory—insufficient capital—no one who knows how to handle the machinery—" "—William Davis, Campeche, Camp., Mexico was recently looking for a partner to help exploit his own timber tracts—".

I just had a talk at the Mexican Embassy today on the subject and assure you of most courteous attention on all manner of data appertaining to the exploitation of lands of the National Domain of Mexico if you communicate directly with Mr. Suastegui, Commercial Attaché of the Mexican Embassy, 16th St. Washington, D. C. But I believe you would do far better and be far safer if you entered into business with some large American interest already in possession of the land and safely grounded.

I have been thinking it over and if you thoroughly understand the making of veneers, I don't know of a greater gold mine in Southeastern Mexico than the making of mahogany and similar beautiful hardwood veneers for both local consumption and export to the states.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Tasmania

THE following comprehensive treatise of a not too well-known island has been put into leaflet form. Copies of the leaflets may be obtained from the expert who prepared the article, Mr. Phillip Norman.

TASMANIA is an island about one hundred miles off the southeast extremity of Australia, from which it is separated by Bass Strait. It is shaped like a heart or an irregular triangle. Its greatest length from north to south is 186 miles, its medium breadth is 165 miles and its area 26,215 square miles.

It was discovered in 1642 by the Dutch Navigator, Abel Janz Tasman, who, believing it to be a part of the Australian continent, gave it the name of the contemporary Dutch governor of the East Indies. Its other name of Tasmania was given it in honor of the navigator himself. Its next visitor, after the lapse of more than a century, was Captain Cook, who saw it in 1769, and coasted along part of it without detecting Tasman's mistake. The fact of its separation from Australia was first made known in 1797, by Mr. Bass, a surgeon of the British navy, who, on a voluntary voyage of discovery in a skiff little larger than a whale boat, sailed far enough through the strait, which was later deservedly named after him, to ascertain its true character. The following year he set out on another voyage with Lieut. Flinders and completed his discovery by a circumnavigation of the island.

The first settlement on the island was made in 1803 by a guard of soldiers with a body of convicts.

For a series of years the great obstacles to the prosperity of the colony were the hostility of the natives and the depredation of escaped convicts (known as bushrangers). The latter ultimately perished by the sword or by the hand of justice. But it is impossible not to lament the fate of the natives, who, after they had been reduced from a comparatively dense population of several thousand to a mere remnant, were removed first to Flinders Island, and then to Maria Island on the southeast coast.

The race is now entirely extinct.

The shores of Tasmania are generally bold and rocky, particularly the west, which present long ranges of barren cliffs or columnar basalt, with scarcely an opening in which a vessel can find shelter, except those of Macquarie Harbor and Port Davey. The northeast shores are almost equally precipitous. But in the north, where several low sandy beaches occur, we have, among other harbors, the fine estuary of the Tamar, and in the southeast and south an almost uninterrupted series of anchorages which for shelter, bottom and depth are unsurpassed in any part of the world. In particular, D'Entrecasteaux Channel, which stretches for about thirty miles between the south coast and the island of Bruni, with a breadth varying from two miles to eight miles, and forms the southwest entrance to the Derwert, at the mouth of which the capital city of Hobart is situated, is a continuous line of landlocked harbors in the midst of magnificent scenery. The interior is remarkably rugged and mountainous.

In all the mountain ranges, and generally throughout the island, the prevailing rocks are crystalline, consisting of basalt, granite, gneiss, quartz, etc., either produced directly by volcanic action or altered and molded by it. The scenery is often of the wildest description. Enormous peaks of the most fantastic shapes, tower into the clouds, or overhang profound and tortuous abysses, evidently formed by the rending of whole mountains asunder. In these the most frightful precipices occur, among others one in Ben Lomond with a perpendicular depth of three thousand feet. Beyond the range of these convulsions, however, regular sedimentary strata, chiefly of sandstone and limestone, are largely developed, and form gentle hills or undulating valleys, equally remarkable for beauty and fertility, and usually watered by copious streams.

The river system radiates from the central portions of the island toward the coast, and issues from lakes and springs, at an average altitude of two thousand feet above the sea. Of these streams by far the largest is the Derwent, which, issuing from the beautiful mountain-lake of St. Clair, pours its waters into the ocean through two main channels.

Clarence Lake, the largest in the island and situated near its center, about ninety miles northwest of Hobart, is fifteen miles long by five miles broad, but owing to the numerous creeks and windings of its shores measures nearly one hundred miles in circuit. Its scenery is incomparably beautiful. The climate is colder and more humid than that of Australia. The spring months—September, October and November—are usually bright and clear, with occasional rain and high winds. The summer heat, which averages about seventy degrees, sometimes rises suddenly to one hundred or one hundred and ten degrees, partly in consequence of a stifling and blighting north or northwest wind, but is almost always tempered by alleviating land and sea breezes.

Autumn, by far the pleasantest season, comprehending March, April and May, is generally clear and bright, and free from clouds and mists. Winter is never severe except in high or exposed situations, where frost is frequent and snow often falls, while in the lower grounds its moderate and genial showers rather assist than obstruct the husbandman's labors.

The indigenous herbivorous animals are mostly of the pouched kinds, common to Australia. Here is found a unique animal of its kind, called the native tiger by the settler. It is the largest carnivorous animal in Australasia.

Fruit-growing and jam-making are important industries. Immense quantities of Tasmanian apples are sent to London by the steamers which call at Hobart in the fruit season. Wool is an important though not the most important article of export.

Tasmania is rich in minerals, and a good deal of mining is carried on. Tin has been most extensively worked hitherto.

Valuable deposits of gold, copper, silver and coal have also been exploited.

Hobart—the capital—is a well-laid-out town, with very good streets and handsome buildings. It is beautifully situated on a series of low foot-hills at the base of Mount Wellington, just at the point where the River Derwent enters one of the finest harbors in the southern hemisphere. Launceston—the only other large town—is on the River Tamar, and is the chief port of the north. It is the nearest port to Melbourne, with which it has steam communication, and is joined to Hobart by railway.

In latter years the island has progressed slowly. In 1917-18 its exports totaled a value of £951,623, increasing to £2,067,443 in 1921-22. Its imports in 1921-22 came to £1,385,958, leaving a trade-balance of nearly a million pounds in its favor.

The population last census—1921—was: males, 197,748; females, 106,037, an aggregate total of 213,785. The State education system is free, secular and compulsory .75 per cent. of the people profess some form of Protestantism, as opposed to Catholicism. Its affairs are controlled by a parliament elected on the adult suffrage principle, and at the present moment is governed by a Labor Ministry without a majority of the elected members.

Financially, its position is gloomy and depressing. Its expenditure is consistently greater than the receipts, and the people are taxed almost to the limit of human endurance.

In 1901 Tasmania became a unit of the Australian Commonwealth of States. In a few years it realised that, like West Australia, it had been committed to a one-sided contract spelling taxation and depression. Today it is appealing to the Commonwealth for a loan of 1,000,000 dollars or £200,000.

As the national indebtedness of Australasia is now over £1,000,000,000—population less than 6 millions—and is still growing, it must be confessed that the outlook for the nation is disquieting in the extreme. Thousands of people subscribed to the belief that the only way out is a revolution and the extinction of a bastard democracy by a virile autocracy. The principle of Fascism has many thousands of adherents in this embarrassed island-continent.—PHILLIP NORMAN.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

South Africa

FRUIT trees in the Orange River Colony.

Request:—"As a reader of *Adventure* I wish to take advantage of the information that you have to offer regarding Cape Colony and Orange River Colony South Africa.

I would like a short outline of climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports, living conditions and minerals.

I am a horticultural graduate and would be especially interested in advice as to horticultural opportunities. What are the prospects for apple orcharding on a large scale, also prospects for fruit-tree nursery?

I am now engaged in the nursery business on a small scale.

I would appreciate the booklets that you offer on horticultural subjects."—SAMUEL S. CHRISTENSEN, Murphysboro, Illinois.

Reply, by Captain Franklin:—The climate of South Africa is, I think, the best in the world. You have your rainy season at regular intervals and too hot by day; the nights are always cool. There is shooting and fishing in abundance. Game laws are strict and permission to hunt is necessary in any part.

A fruit-tree nursery should pay very well, in fact, better than a fruit-orchard as the market for fruit is purely local. I am sending you a book on fruit growing. I also enclose two printed pamphlets which speak for themselves. The living conditions are ideal for a white man. My advice to you is to write the people mentioned and underlined in red pencil in pamphlet.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Bait

WHEN you tempt the carp as well as what you tempt him with is important.

Request:—"I wish you would kindly let me know the best kind of bait to use for carp. There is a good-sized pond near my home fed by underground springs, and I have tried a dozen times or more for them. I used worms, crabs, grasshoppers and dough balls (a mixture consisting of flour, water and a little ground meat). You can see them at times but I could never get them to bite."—WALTER WARSAW, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Reply, by Mr. Thompson:—You have about run the gamut of baits for carp. Change the method of making your dough balls by adding corn-meal to it, and then try night fishing instead of day fishing, and I feel you will have success. You want the bait to rest right on the bottom of the stream, pond or lake in which you fish.

Canadian Lakes

OBSCURE or unfrequented ones are getting more and more rare.

Request:—"I have a cottage or camp on an inland lake about twelve miles southeast of Parry Sound. It is off the beaten track and has been slow in attracting tourists. The lake is getting too busy, now, and I should like to buy an island at some more isolated spot and build a cottage. The family consists of my wife, a son twelve years old, and myself. These are the points I am considering:

1. We should like to locate within a mile, approximately of a native family who might supply milk, bread, and occasionally, perhaps, a few vegetables.

2. Island of about five acres preferred, but would take any *wooded* island, or possibly a point.

3. Would like fishing to be good enough to supply gamey fish for the table once a day without prolonged fishing. Bass and lunge preferred.

4. Should be a dissuading distance from railway and automobile roads, and off thoroughfare for motor boats.

5. Want cottage log or stone material and labor would need to be obtainable—within some twenty-five miles, for the labor.

6. I have been thinking of the region around Lake Nipissing; that west, say for a hundred miles, of Capreol; the district between Temagami and Temiskaming—Rib Lake, Johnson, Latchford, Cobalt; Temiskaming itself—Haileyboro, New Lisgeard; and the district a little northwest, represented by stations such as Elk Lake, Englehart, Timmins, Iroquois Falls (with Abitibi Lake). Distance from Pittsburgh is the factor in considering these.

7. I believe lunge disappear in some of the places I mention. Is it because of a watershed that cuts off the Great Lakes?

8. My principal query is how far I must go to get a reasonable degree of seclusion without getting into rugged situations for family, summer cottage purposes. I fancy there are smaller lakes ordinarily accessible only by canoe that would be desirable, but these can not be found on such maps, or in such literature, as I have.

Of course I don't expect you to name the specific lake: but if I learn just where there are some that seem likely to provide about what I want, I'll make a trip to that region next summer, from our present summer camp. I can't investigate much of Ontario in a season.

Thank you very much for your reply. I enclose reply envelope with International Reply Coupon." —W. E., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Reply, by Miss Robinson:—I fear I shall not be able to supply you with the name of any specific lake or island for a summer home, but perhaps I shall be able to direct you to the proper source of information. Hon. James Lyons, Minister of Lands and Forests for Ontario, House of Assembly, Toronto, Ontario, should have in his possession a list of places which might contain all the things you ask for. Personally I do not know of any such place as you want—remote from traffic, etc., convenient to the base of supplies, etc., for if I did, I should buy such a place for myself. Ontario is fast filling up with tourists who want such places and I understand your wanting to get "far from the madding crowd."

Here are some localities I would suggest for your purpose: Algonquin Park, with its myriad lakes, some quite remote from centers but, I fancy, accessible by water and, to within a reasonable distance, by railroad. In the Park which is 100 miles square, thus securing you isolation, are virgin lakes as to fishing; timber in plenty for a log camp and a few Indians who live by helping tourists, guiding, etc. When you write to the Department of Lands and Forests, tell them just what you want. The Ontario Gov't. is said to have a number of desirable camp sites for sale. Georgian Bay, with its 30,000 islands, offers such inducements.

I am well acquainted with that locality and while up among its islands this last summer, I heard that some of those islands, generally supposed to be all purchased, have gone back to the Ontario Gov't. for sale. Write the Government concerning some of these. The bay has good fishing, bass, pickerel, lunge, etc., with not too arduous attempts to catch them, though, from experience, I think that from the middle of July on is the best fishing season. A tug plies daily from Parry Sound to Point Au Baril, bringing supplies of all kinds at reasonable rates.

You speak of the region around Lake Nipissing, Capreol, Temagami, Temiskaming, New Lisgeard, etc. I am fairly well acquainted with that part of the country, but know of no specific spot of your requirements. You know about the Black Flies of those districts, of course? Very bad until the middle of July, at least. And, as far as I know, most of those places are pretty well filled up. However, when you write, ask about those places too. Have you thought of the Ottawa River? Wonderful scenery, fishing, etc. Back in the Laurentian Hills are small lakes which might suit you. The Dep't of Lands and Forests for the Province of Quebec would supply you with information as to those localities.

Have you ever thought of Cape Breton, that island on the north of Nova Scotia? I was there this summer, and of all the places for summering, I recommend the region around Bras d'Or. It is Paradise regained. Good fishing (the people there live by fishing, mostly) wonderful sea bathing and not swarming over with people. The boat from Boston takes you to Yarmouth, thence by rail or motor for a day or so, across the Strait of Canso and then into that land of lakes and hills, blue with blueberries. Anywhere there you could get supplies, etc. I most heartily recommend Cape Breton, N. S., for your purpose. If you write Mr. Fraser, Prop'r of Hotel Baddeck, Baddeck, Nova Scotia, he might be able to give you an exact location for your requirements. He has a wonderful hotel, with real home cooking, and is most obliging.

Quebec, also, would be comparatively near to Pittsburgh, and is not so overdone as to tourists as is Ontario. Neither is Nova Scotia, and both have wild, rugged scenery, with the desired isolation. This summer I covered by car many hundreds of miles of our Eastern Provinces and was charmed with them all. Food, too, is, I really think, cheaper than in Ontario.

These are only suggestions, I hope they may result in your getting the spot of your desire.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

State Police

REGULATIONS and requirements for Massachusetts are rather strict.

Request:—"Would you please give me what information you can in regard to the State Police in Massachusetts? I am 24 yr. of age, 168 lbs, height 5 ft. 6½ in. American by birth; both 'Parents' born in America, in good health. I wish to join the force, am a good runner and jumper, and a good shot with a steady hand."—WM. A. REGAN, Boston, Mass.

Reply, by Mr. Bent:—Requirements for Massachussetts State Police are:

Height—not less than five feet, seven inches.

Weight—according to standard table of weight for age and height.

Age—between 21 and 40 years—preferably 25 to 30 years.

Very rigid physical examination. Written examination must show knowledge of denser populated portions of state. Where large mills are located and what manufactured, and where people of various nationalities in large numbers are found. Knowledge of roads and highways, rivers and harbors, lakes and ponds, also steam and electric railways. What candidate considers a state police officer's duties to be. Simple questions regarding prominent Massachusetts persons and history, past or present, etc., etc.

A trooper receives $1200 a year besides uniforms, arms and equipment, and food and shelter.

Duties are general police duties all over the state besides enforcing the State Motor Vehicle Laws.

Write to Commissioner of Public Safety, Room 24, State House, Boston, for enlistment application blank.

I wish you the best of luck and hope that you'll let me know how you make out.

If there is anything else you want to know, don't hesitate to call again.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Pacific Northwest

FARMING near Yakima.

Request:—"I am writing to ask a few questions about this charmed Pacific Northwest country as they call it. Is there good farming lands near and around the city of Yakima as they all claim? How far away is the Yakima Indian Reservation from Yakima? How far is Yakima from Seattle, Wash., and Portland, Oregon?

By what rail, bus line, etc., could Yakima be reached from either of the said cities?

I am not very well experienced in farm work. I haven't worked on a farm for a long time but I am hard working and very willing to start on any farm and learn the new methods. To whom shall I apply? Who would hire an unexperienced man?"—FRANK MAKOWSKI, Camp Lewis, Wash.

Reply, by Mr. Harriman:—Yakima River furnishes water to irrigate 110,000 acres of land and they seldom irrigate poor land anywhere. That should tell you something. The county has in it 3,237,360 acres, of which the Indians own 800,000 in their reservation; 46,240 acres are mountainous semiarid and timbered land, still unappropriated, which does not mean good farming land by a large margin.

The city of Yakima is just across the river from the northeastern corner of the reservation. Yakima City is approximately 100 miles in a straight line from Seattle. It is about the same from Portland. The Northern Pacific trains take you to Yakima, from Seattle. O. W. R. & N. also from either city.

It has been stated in Ask Adventure heading in every issue that the department is not in any sense an employment bureau. To answer your two questions as to "who to apply to and what would they pay" a man must be a well-posted employment agent.

The question as to whether or not a farmer would hire a green hand and teach him the work, I must say that the wage would be so very small in such a case that you would need a butterfly net to catch it. However, farmers do hire men who are totally ignorant of farming, in a great many cases, if the man is strong, willing and eager to learn.

If a man is half-hearted in his service, if he is lazy or careless or stupid, he is apt to find himself out of a job very abruptly.

The farmer has to work hard to make any surplus for his old age. He is at it early and late, in sun and rain, snow and wind. The weather can not be regarded at certain times, for he must see to it that his stock is cared for, whether he is comfortable or not. If grain is out where rain will spoil it, it is up to him to protect it. His own care and comfort come last, after the cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, goats and poultry are all cared for properly.

I have worked out in torrential rains, in blizzards, in windstorms and in all kinds of discomfort on a farm, for I was a farmer's son and had to do a man's work from the time that I became fourteen, till I was twenty-one. My father was one of the kindest men in America, but he always told us boys that we must think of the comfort of our stock first and we did it, often to our painful regret.

Farming is done on a totally different plane in these days, but it means hard work if one is to succeed, even now.

To go back to Yakima—the irrigated land is valuable and the land not irrigated is almost impossible, as a farming proposition.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address JOSEPH COX, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

FROM S. J. Duffield, of Lodi, California, comes an excellent version of a song, which has several times been asked for in the department. It is the most complete text I have yet found. He says:

"I enclose an old song popular amongst the sporting element in the early days of Oklahoma and the Indian Territory. As I heard fragments of it everywhere, it aroused my curiosity, and I finally got it in its entirety. It is founded on an actual happening in St. Louis in the early 80's."

Stackalee

Come all you sporty fellows,
And listen unto me,
I will tell to you the awful tale
Of that bad man Stackalee,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

'The night was dark and stormy,
And the rain came pouring down;
There was nary a police
In that part of town.
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

It was on this dark and
Cold stormy night
That Billy Lyons and Stackalee
They had that awful fight.
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Billy Lyons on the sidewalk
Dropped his razor from his hand;
In front of him a-shootin'
Old Stackalee did stand,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

"O Stackalee, O Stackalee,
Please spare my life,
For I have got two babies
And a darling little wife."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

"I care not for your babies
Nor your darling little wife;
You dun ruint my Stetson hat,
And I am bound to have your life."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Then he leaned down right close
And put that gun agin Billy's breast,
And fired two shots so close to him
They sot fire to his vest,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Down Walker Street
Old Stackalee did run,
Holding in his right hand
That smoking forty-one,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

He run into Ben Scott's saloon
And before the bar did stand,
Saying, "Take my pistol, bar boy,
I dun killed another man."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Ben Scott sent for the police
And they came on the run;
The bar boy up and told them
What old Stackalee dun done,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Says a police to the Sergeant,
"Now what do you think of that!
Old Stackalee shot Billy Lyons
About a damned old hat,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee."

Says the Captain to the police,
"Just keep still as any mouse,
And we will sure catch old Stackalee
At his woman's house,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee."

Two police in the alley
Hiding behind a tree;
Two more out in the front yard
For to catch old Stackalee,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

A man run up the alley
Splashing through the mud;
He run right up against that tree
Where them two police stood—
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

"Your name is Henry Wells,
But they call you Stackalee;
You are my prisoner;
Come and go with me."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

"My name's not Stackalee,
Nor is it Henry Wells;
I am not your prisoner,
You go get someone else."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

They put the handcuffs on him
And took him to the jail,
And there they put him in a cell
And wouldn't take no bail,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Mrs. Stackalee
When she heard the awful news
Was sitting in the bedroom
A-taking off her shoes.
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

She rushed down to the jailhouse
And fell upon her knees,
"I'll give ten thousand dollars,
Just to get the jailor's keys."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Next morning in the jailhouse,
Old Stackalee in bed,
A turnkey came and told him
That Billy Lyons was dead.
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Then they took him into court
To have him make his plea,
The judge says, "Are you guilty?"
"I is," says Stackalee,
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

"I cannot sleep,
Neither can I eat,
Since I shot poor Billy Lyons
Down in Walker Street."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

The judge put on the black cap
His voice was stern and cold;
"I sentences you to be hanged—
The Lord have mercy on your soul."
That bad, that bad man Stackalee.

Now all you sporty fellows
That have listened to my tale,
Do not shoot another man
Or they'll hang you in the jail,
Like they did that bad man Stackalee.

I AM interested in this song not only because it is an excellent example of the type that is founded upon an actual happening, but because it contains so many verses that appear in other songs. Either verses have originated here and been taken over into the other songs or *vice versa*.

In order to trace with any certainty the history of the exchanges of verses, I need many more versions of the song, and as much authentic information as possible concerning the shooting, the men concerned in it, the place where it occurred, and the date. I should also like any information that any of you can give concerning the supposed authorship. Was it a negro or a white man who first started the song, and what was its original form?

ADDRESS all communications to R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

ORLICK THE EAGLE — ***Kenneth Malcolm Murray***
It was a dog worth flying for.

HUNTER'S CODE — ***Don Cameron Shafer***
Laws of death and the division of spoils.

TOBY'S WHITE RATS — ***Captain Dingle***
Sailors can save their own lives.

LA RUE OF THE 88 Part III — ***Gordon Young***
Western justice moves swiftly.

COCKNEY — ***Robert Carse***
The big Russian feared the machete.

THE WERE-COUGAR *An Off-the-Trail Story* — ***Raymond S. Spears***
They could not tame his eyes.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by W. C. Tuttle, Thomson Burtis, L. Patrick Greene, Talbot Mundy, Will Levington Comfort, F. R. Buckley, Charles Victor Fischer, W. Townend, T. S. Stribling and Leonard H. Nason; and *short* stories by William Westrup, Don Waters, Alan LeMay, George E. Holt, Clements Ripley, John Webb, S. B. H. Hurst, William Byron Mowery, John Dorman, L. Paul F. St. Mars, Albert Richard Wetjen.

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Mystery—intrigue—and breathless adventure! War—love—and fights galore.

THE LAW OF THE RANGE
W. C. Tuttle
Sheepherder and cattleman and war to the death in old Nevada days.

MORMON VALLEY
H. Bedford-Jones
From the streets of New York to the blistering heat of the Painted Skull bad lands.

THE SHERIFF OF PECOS
H. Bedford-Jones
With a smile—two holsters—sheriff's star, a horse and a death-dealing gun saying, "I am the law of the West!"

SCAVENGERS OF THE SEA
Geo. Ethelbert Walsh
A dashing two-fisted romance of the Caribbean. A courageous man and a loyal girl.

THE HEN HERDER, J. Allan Dunn
A daring holdup of the Sorimento National Bank. Blood-thirsty bandits. A posse and a mad chase led by a tenderfoot!

THE LAST GRUBSTAKE, Anthony M. Rud
Gold—a man true to his word! Claim jumpers—fighting galore—and action every minute.

THE SEVEN PEARLS OF SHANDI
Magruder Maury
A blood-boiling tale of world-wide plot to steal a fortune in pearls. A crafty international crook—dashing adventure.

THE ONE BIG THING, - - - - - J. B. Hendryx
A tale of the frozen mystery of the great North. A race against death through the wrath of an Arctic hell.

MUSKET HOUSE, - - - - - - T. G. Roberts
A thrilling, creepy mystery of lost treasure in an old Canadian homestead—days of stage coaches and pistols for two.

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